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FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN. BEIJING 1995

COUNTRY REPORT

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT • MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय
कृपया पुस्तक के ऊपर कोई निशान आदि
न लगायें।

DONATION

FOREWORD

We have travelled a long way from the First UN World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 to the Fourth World Conference at Beijing in 1995 in search of **Equality, Development and Peace.**

It has been a hard journey through a hostile environment of discrimination and inequity. Attitudes and ideologies that have crystallized over centuries of patriarchal mind-sets and paternal instincts of security for the fragile, are hard to be transformed in a few decades. This has been the experience of India, as in most parts of the world.

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Despite the persistence of gender inequality and discrimination, the determined efforts that nations have made in the last few decades, (and specifically in the two decades of the United Nation's initiative to mainstream gender-issues in national policies) has sensitized societies and Governments to the prevalence of gender discrimination.

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Women's movements the world-over, have gathered momentum to move national Governments to alter their legislation, increase resource allocations to enhance the status of women and mainstream them in the course of development. The women's movement in India has played a vital role in this direction. The Constitution of India founded on a base of equality has moved to an affirmative position of empowering women to give them a share in the decision making processes. The Government of India have further extended this process to programme implementation through the Indira Mahila Yojana.

The agenda of action, has brought the 'girl child' under focus; set up National Machineries to translate the intents of laws and policies into a way of life. The concerns are yet many; the path is dreary and the destination is still distant.

The India Country Report sketches the efforts, achievements and limitations in giving women the status they deserve and the recognition they merit.

The picture emerging in the report and the data that has been meticulously put together with the perceptions of women active in the field, would be an useful reference material. It should surely point to the directions to be taken in future for a more gender-just and gender-equitous society.

New Delhi
23.8.1995

DR. SARALA GOPALAN
SECRETARY

पुस्तकालय
पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Country Report has been prepared under the overall guidance and supervision of a National Preparatory Committee. Contributions have been received from Core Groups, which worked under designated nodal Experts. Inputs have come in to enrich the base papers from country-wide consultations held over a period of two years, both within and outside the Government. The Report has evolved through this unique process into its present form. It may be read thematically and as a piece. The accent is on analysis of key issues and projection of challenges and visions.

Government of India acknowledges the extremely useful contributions received and places on record its deep appreciation of the collective endeavour to reflect the reality, hopes and aspirations of Indian Women through this Country Report.

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COUNTRY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. As human development moves centre-stage in the global development debate, gender equality and gender equity are emerging as major challenges. Gender discrimination, though amongst the most subtle, is one of the most all pervading forms of institutionalised deprivation.

2. From Mexico to Copenhagen, on to Nairobi and finally to Beijing is merely two decades of contemporary social history. However, if one looks at the history of the struggle for women's rights, both in India and around the world, it constitutes one of the most eventful and momentous in recent times.

3. Home to over 400 million women, a country acknowledged for its unity in diversity, plurality of traditions, institutions and customs and proud of its heritage of eclecticism, India's contribution to the global debate on women's issues has been rich, diverse and in many ways unique.

4. The principles of gender equality and gender equity have been basic to Indian thinking. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw a succession of women's movements first around social issues and later around the freedom struggle itself. The Constitution of India adopted in 1950 not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of affirmative discrimination in favour of women. The Constitution further imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

5. In 1971, the Government appointed a Committee on the Status of Women in India. It raised basic questions about the socialisation processes inherent in a hierarchical society, about the resource, power and asset distribution patterns as well as diverse cultural values in the country. Its report "Towards Equality" led to wide policy debates in the seventies wherein there was a recognisable shift from viewing women as targets of welfare policies in the social sector to regarding them as critical actors of development. This was clearly reflected in the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) which contained for the first time in India's planning history a Chapter on Women and Development. It conceived of a multi-pronged strategy as essential for women's development relating to (a) employment and economic independence; (b) education; (c) access to health care and family planning; (d) support services to meet practical gender needs and (e) the creation of an enabling policy institutional and legal environment.

6. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) promises to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not by pass women and special programmes are implemented to complement the general development programmes. Therefore, the flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of employment, education and health are to be monitored very closely. The approach of the Eighth Plan which regards women as equal partners in development processes marks a progress from the goal of development to that of empowerment of women.

7. In order to meet the increasing and challenging needs of women there has been a progressive increase in the Plan Outlays over the last four developmental decades. The outlay of Rs. 4 crores in the First Plan (1951-56) has gone up to over Rs. 2000 crores in the Eighth Plan.

8. India's search for an organisational structure to co-ordinate efforts towards gender equality and gender equity began with the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953. The concept of a National Machinery has been evolving ever since. A Department of Women and Child Development was set up in 1985 under the newly created Ministry of Human Resource Development. There has been a subsequent growth of many new institutions to interact with and add on to the existing network. Amongst these one of the most significant is the setting up of the National Commission for Women by an Act of Parliament in 1990.

9. Several initiatives have been taken by Government to improve the status of women. These have

been supplemented by concerted efforts of the women's movement and the voluntary sector. The progress in the last few decades has been noteworthy. In areas relating to women's rights, education, employment and health significant gains have been achieved. More women are literate, there is a better understanding of rights and responsibilities, there is greater awareness and gender sensitivity, better access to health services and income generation has become available to many women.

10. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 constitute a watershed for the advancement of Indian women. They ensure 1/3 of the total elected seats and positions of Chairpersons in rural and urban local elected bodies to women. About 1 million women are estimated to emerge as leaders at the grass-roots levels in the rural areas alone. Of these 75,000 are to be Chairpersons.

11. Inspite of these singular policies, programmes and achievements certain critical areas call for immediate attention. They are related to the following :

- **Inadequacy of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.**
- **Persistent and institutionalised discrimination against the girl child.**
- **Feminisation of poverty.**
- **Gender blindness in macro-economic policies.**
- **Invisibility of women's contribution to the economy and environmental sustenance.**
- **Poor participation by women in decision making structures and processes.**
- **Gender gaps in literacy, education and health.**
- **Growing trend of violence against women.**
- **Barriers encountered by women in accessing legal entitlements.**
- **Gender biased societal norms.**
- **Negative portrayals and perpetuation of gender stereotypes by mass media.**

12. The Government, women's movement and the voluntary sector are deeply conscious of the challenges that lie ahead. If development is about people it is essential to increase their capabilities to develop themselves. If women are in a state of economic, social, political and knowledge disempowerment, the imperative is to reverse this process. Instead of merely adding a gender agenda to a development plan drawn up by the gender insensitive, the goal should be to redraw it by mainstreaming women's perspectives. It is this empowerment strategy which has emerged as India's response to the challenges of equality, development and peace. For women to be truly empowered it is necessary to provide an expanding network of services so that they are freed from some of their gender related shackles of a practical nature and are also enabled to aspire to the actualisation of their strategic gender needs.

13. In this scenario there is tremendous hope and expectation of the emergence of a re-ordered world, touched by the principles of humanity, dignity, gender equality and gender equity. This has been under-scored by India's endorsement of gender justice that has emerged as a consensus at recent International Conferences relating to human rights, population and development and social development.

14. The ambience at the national and international levels provides the appropriate opportunity to make the Platform for Action to be adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women eminently achievable.

15. The Country Report represents India's unshakeable commitment and is dedicated to the cause, hopes, dreams and visions of Indian women.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SITUATION OF INDIAN WOMEN

From Mexico to Copenhagen on to Nairobi and finally to Beijing, is just two decades of contemporary social history. In terms of time frame, two decades of social history constitute a very short span. However, if one looks at the history of the struggle for women's rights both in India and in the world, this period has been one of the most eventful. From the fervent feminism of the sixties to the introspections on women's status in the seventies, to women -in-development debates in the eighties and to focus on gender issues in the nineties, has been a momentous but short transition. From women's problems to women's issues, finally to women's perspectives, there has been a whole reshaping of paradigms of development.

The Heritage

1. Home for over 400 million women, a country acknowledged for its plurality of traditions, customs and institutions and proud of its heritage of eclecticism, India's contribution to the global women's debate has been rich, diverse and in many ways unique. Like the many contrasts that India's long and variegated history mirrors, the image of the Indian woman is also far from uniform. Nothing would therefore be more inaccurate than to try and posit a generalized picture of the Indian woman across social, economic and cultural spaces. The formidable task is to try and capture these contributions, experiences and struggles of Indian women, their achievements, their concerns, their despairs, their perspectives and their visions.

2. The principle of gender equality has been basic to Indian thinking for over a century. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a succession of women's movements, first around burning social issues like women's education and widow remarriage and then around the freedom struggle itself. The Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Indian National Congress in 1931 adopted gender equality as a guiding principle. A deep concern with the status of women and the recognition that the progress of the nation is integrally linked with the advancement of women, have under-pinned Indian planning and polity since Independence. Mahatma Gandhi was a champion of women's rights. He emphasised that, "subjugation and exploitation of women was a product of men's interested teachings and woman's acceptance of them". To this, women for all walks of life responded magnificiently. The leaders of the nation recognized that a freedom gained without the active involvement of women would be a hollow and fragile freedom and called upon women to place the nation above family and faith and "enter the struggle as crusaders in a sacred cause". The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of affirmative discrimination in favour of women. The Constitution further imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to uphold the dignity of women.

Present Scenario

3. India has come a long way since Independence. The democratic framework, multi-party system and freedom of association and speech have encouraged free and frank debate on policies and programmes between Government and the public.

4. The Indian experience in improving the quality of life of the people and promoting equity provides a wealth of ideas and practices for new directions for the future. The achievements are significant and reflect the efforts made in all directions : the thrust towards poverty eradication, investment in social and economic infrastructure, spread of extension services, information dissemination and strengthening of institutions - social, economic and political - both Governmental and Non-Governmental. This political and administrative framework has also ensured space for reflection and accomodation of the diversity and heterogeneity of India.

5. A deep concern about the rights and status of women has marked Indian political thinking. A striking feature in India society has been the

symbiotic and mutually complementary relationship that has developed over the years between Government, women's movement and non-Governmental organisations. The women's movement in India continuously interacts with and influences public opinion and Government action. This is a tribute both to the maturity of thinking within Government and the movement and to the deep-rooted democratic tradition of this nation.

6. Following this tradition and in response to a request from the United Nations the Government of India in 1971 appointed a Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) to examine all questions relating to the rights and status of women in the context of changing social and economic conditions in the country. The Committee, comprising, among others, eminent representatives of the women's movement, raised basic questions about the socialization processes inherent in a hierarchial society, about the resource, power and asset distribution patterns and about diverse cultural values of this country. In its report "Towards Equality", it made several important recommendations and also stressed the need for special temporary measures to transform the de-jure equality guaranteed by India's Constitution and legal edifice into de-facto equality.

7. A significant outcome of these policy debates in social and economic fields and advocacy efforts of the women's movement in the seventies was a shift in recognition from viewing women as targets of welfare policies in the social sector to regarding them as critical groups for development. This recognition was reflected in the 6th Five Year Plan (1980-85) which contained, for the first time in India's planning history, a chapter on Women and Development. The 6th Five Year Plan, conceived of a multi-pronged strategy as essential for women's development - (a) employment & economic independence; (b) education;(c) access to health care and family planning; (d) support services to meet the practical gender needs of women and (e) the creation of an enabling policy, institutional and legal environment.

8. In India the search for an organizational structure to coordinate efforts towards equality had commenced with the setting up the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 and the concept of a National Machinery has been evolving ever since. A separate Department of Women & Child Development was set up in 1985 under the newly created Ministry of Human Resource Development. The decade since Nairobi has seen the growth of many new institutions to interact and to add to the network that today comprises India's national machinery.

9. All efforts of the Government have been directed towards mainstreaming of women into the national development process by raising their overall status - social, economic, legal and political. The impact of various developmental plans, policies and programmes have brought about perceptible improvement in this regard*.

10. Significant gains in respect of women's health status have been achieved. Expectancy of life for females at birth has risen. The sex-differential in Infant Mortality Rate has now been almost bridged. Maternal Mortality Rates have also been showing a declining trend. Similarly, in the field of education, there has been a distinct orientation in favour of women's equality and empowerment. As for employment and work participation, there has been a marked rise as reflected in available statistics.

11. The crowning achievements of this decade have been the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1993) which guarantee women a minimum 1/3 representation in all local bodies both in the rural and urban areas and also reserve, in one single stroke, 1/3 of all posts of Chairpersons for women.

Critical Areas of Concern

12. Such achievements, notwithstanding, women still comprise the largest section of population living in absolute poverty and they represent the poorest of the poor. Gender discrimination today, though amongst the most subtle, is one of the most all pervading forms of deprivation. A most telling demographic symptom of such deprivation is the persistence of an adverse sex ratio which declined from 934 females per 1000 males in 1981 to 927 females per 1000 males in 1991. Gender violence, both societal as well as domestic, continues unabated.

13. Women continue to be in marginal employments and low levels of skills, their contribution being largely "invisible". The prevailing social construction of gender largely relegates women to the inside sphere. Reproduction and responsibilities of nuturance, management of a fragile environment, and low paid or unpaid but heavy work responsibilities in agriculture, animal husbandry and other traditional sectors create a syndrome of gender stereotypes, marginalisation, alienation and deprivation. One of India's greatest poets, Rabindranath Tagore, had expressed the pain and inequity of the situation more than half a century ago, thus,

"O Lord Why have you not given woman the right
to conquer her destiny?
Why does she have to wait head bowed,
By the roadside, Waiting with tired patience,
Hoping for a miracle in the morrow?"

14. Although India and this region have contributed the first and the majority of women Heads of Government and Heads of State in the world, most women, as in the rest of the world, continue to be excluded from decision making processes. The exclusion pervades all levels - Government, corporate, societal and household. Such exclusion ipso facto excludes participation in the overall development process. Lack of access to social entitlements further exacerbates poverty. Preoccupation with survival strategies in a marginalised state of existence becomes a major preoccupation. Low self esteem, institutionalised subordination in society, ignorance of laws, and above all threat of violence creates a vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty and deprivation.

15. Lack of education, information, lack of training and low levels of literacy aggravate the situation of deprivation. Women are thereby excluded not merely from political, social and economic power but knowledge power as well. Therefore, while comprising half of humanity, "contributing 2/3rds of the world's work-hours, she earns only 1/3rd of the total income and owns less than 1/10 th of the world's resources". If the objectives of development are to enlarge peoples' choices, and increase people's capabilities to exercise such choices, nowhere is the challenge more stark and daunting than in the case of poor women. What makes the situation most complex is a general societal inability to be able to discern this aspect of inadequacy of the development response. Many women themselves are often conditioned and browbeaten into insensitivity and unquestioned submission to biases and discriminations which they end up viewing as socially ordained and irrevocable. As for men, they go around blind, seeing and yet not seeing anything.

16. It is this ideology of patriarchy and the accompanying culture of silence which need to be challenged and broken if development is to touch the lives of women.

Looking Ahead

17. It is the empowerment strategy which is today emerging as an unique Indian response to the challenges of equality, development and peace. If women are to be empowered, it is necessary to provide an expanding networking of support services so that they are freed from some of their gender related shackles. If women are to be

economically empowered, they are to be provided with additional channels of credit, training, employment, greater visibility, management skills and social security. If women are to be politically empowered, the immediate imperative is to resort to different forms of affirmative discrimination so that their voices are heard. If women are to be given access to knowledge, power and resources, they should be empowered to demand such education and knowledge resources. If women are to be persons in their own right, they must be in control of their own bodies and suitably empowered.

18. New innovations however are invariably accompanied by new threats and fresh challenges. While Indian women are slowly emerging as active agents participating in and guiding their own destinies, there are certain global developments with major domestic implications which again threaten to marginalize women economically and technologically. The international economic order with its accompanying reverse flow of resources from the poor South to the rich North, the globalization of media, the global technological revolution and the economic restructuring process that invariably accompanies the race towards a free market economy, today have the potential of imposing a disproportionately high burden on poor women. During the last few years, this has emerged as an area of concern both within the Government as well as outside.

19. The last decade of the 20th century has seen the emergence of gender as one of the basic issues of human progress. Concern over the status of women has permeated both thinking and rhetoric. The immediate need to capture women's insight for solving basic problems of poverty, illiteracy, environmental degradation and violence is being felt increasingly and at different levels. The challenges before us is to use this concern and this increased awareness to break the stereotypes and shibboleths of the past and move towards a new generation of men and women working together to build a better world for all of us and posterity.

Based on contributions received from S.K. Guha.

PROFILE OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN

An assessment of the status of Indian women, based on standard socio-economic development indicators related to demography, health, nutrition, mortality, education and employment, is provided below.

Population

1. The 1991 Census counted 407.1 million females against the male population of 439.23 million constituting just less than half (48.09%) of the total population of India (846.30 million). Female population grew at a slower pace of 23.37% during the decade 1981-91 against a decadal growth rate of 23.85% of the total population.

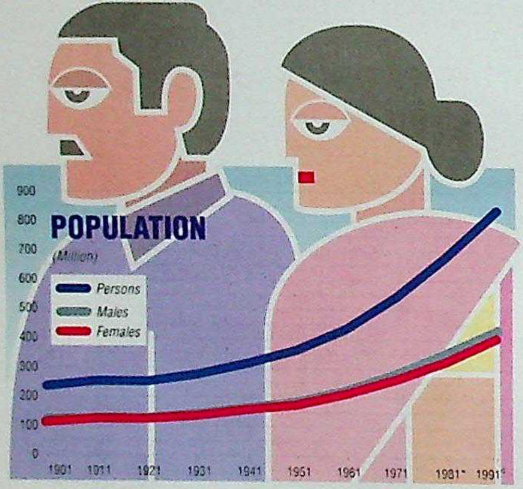


Fig-Ia

* Includes the interpolated population of Assam where 1981 Census could not be held.

@ Includes the projected population of Jammu & Kashmir where 1991 Census was not held.

Source: 1. Census of India 1981 - Series I, India, part-II-A, General Population Tables. Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

2. Census of India 1991-Series I, India, Paper 2 of 1992, Final Population Totals, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

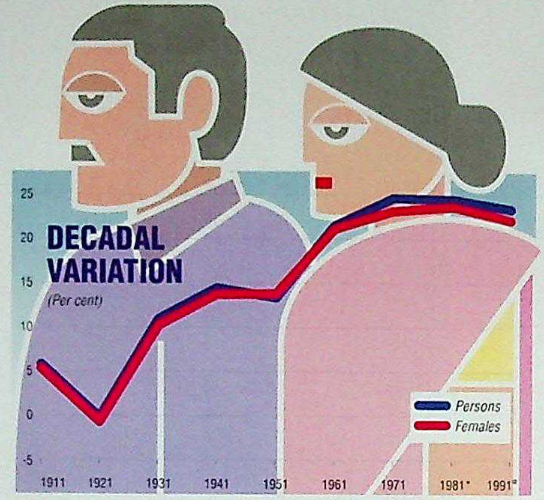


Fig-Ib

* Includes the interpolated population of Assam where 1981 Census could not be held.

@ Includes the projected population of Jammu & Kashmir where 1991 Census was not held.

Source: 1. Census of India 1981 - Series I, India, part-II-A, General Population Tables. Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

2. Census of India 1991-Series I, India, Paper 2 of 1992, Final Population Totals, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

Sex Ratio

2. The sex-ratio which was 972 females per thousand males in 1901 has declined to 927 in 1991 (Fig-Ic). The decline has been more or less steady over the decades, except for a marginal rise between 1941 and 1951 and a small rise, more recently, between 1971 and 1981.

2.1 The adverse sex-ratio for females and its decline since 1901 is attributed mainly to higher mortality among females, as compared to males, in all age groups right from childhood through child-bearing ages. Limited access to the health infrastructure contributing to high maternal mortality and relative deprivation of the female child from nutrition, health and medical care have also been identified as some of the other contributory factors.

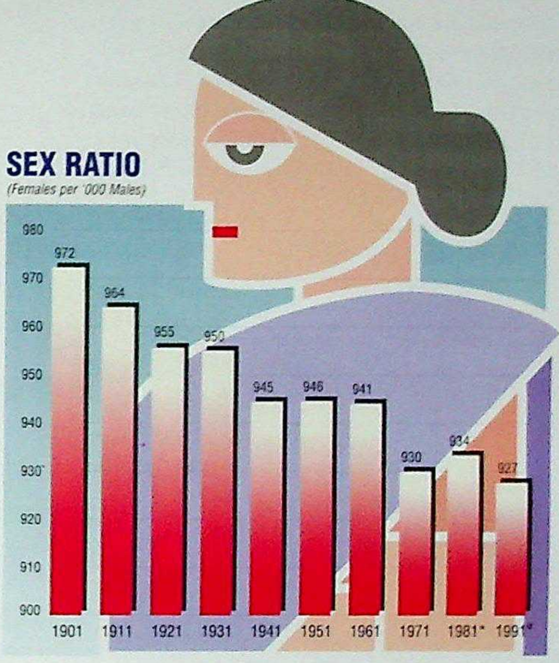


Table-Ic

* Includes the interpolated population of Assam where 1981 Census could not be held.

@ Includes the projected population of Jammu & Kashmir where 1991 Census was not held.

Source: 1. Census of India 1981 - Series I, India, part-II-A, General Population Tables. Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

2. Census of India 1991-Series I, India, Paper 2 of 1992, Final Population Totals, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

2.2 The increase in the sex-ratio from 930 in 1971 to 934 in 1981 was expected to rise further in 1991. But in 1991 the sex-ratio declined to 927, a level lower than that of 1971. This trend was noticed in the sex-ratio for the 0-6 years age group population which declined from 976 in 1961 to 945 in 1991.

Such a steep decline in the sex-ratio in the early ages of life in a short span of 30 years raises concern. It would appear that sex-ratio is declining even at birth. Further analysis would be possible only when the age distribution of the 1991 census population becomes available.

2.3 The adverse sex ratio for women needs to be seen against other indicators of falling mortality rates for both men and women, higher child survival rates and the improvement of life expectancy, which is more significant for women than for men. The improving health care in India should contribute to a more favourable sex ratio for the country in the years to come. Among the factors that would remain to be resolved however, would be the persistent bias in favour of the male child.

Age structure of the Population

3. The 1991 age structure of female population (Fig. II) shows a shift from the very high proportion of children into a higher proportion of adults in the working age group. The percentage of children in the age-group 0-14 years among females has declined from 39.8% in 1981 to 35.9% in 1991. Similarly, male children in 0-4 year age group have also declined during the decade. This is primarily due to decline in fertility and mortality rates, improved chances of child survival and the population as such showing the trend of growing from 'young' into 'adult' in demographic terms. On the other hand, the percentage of women in the working age group 15-59 years shows a rise from 53.9% in 1981 to 57.8% in 1991 mainly due to the relative decline in child population. This also indicates a relative increase of women in the reproductive age group 15-49. The pattern of changes over the decade is similar for both males and females except in 60+ age group.

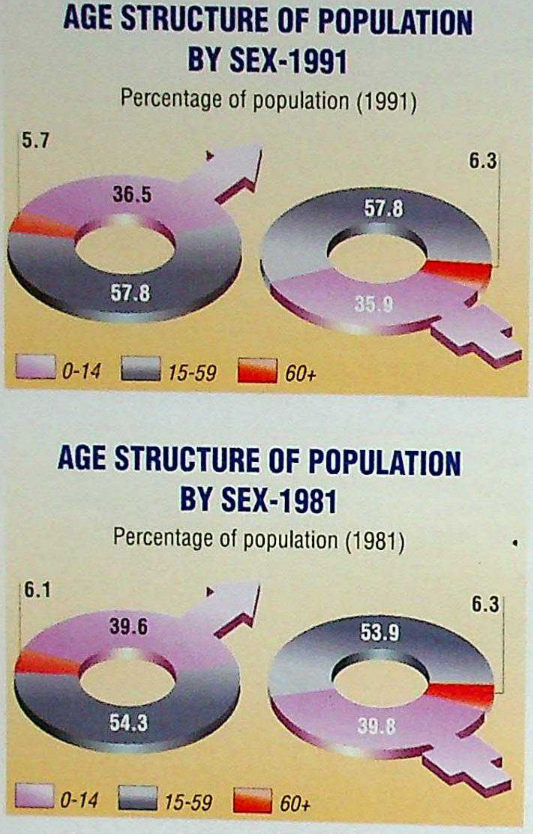


Fig. II

Source: 1 Census of India, 1981, Series-1, India, Part-II Special Report and Tables based on 5% Sample Data Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

2. Sample Registration System - Fertility and Mortality Indicators 1991, Registrar General and Census Commissioner India, New Delhi.

Life Expectation at Birth

4. The country has taken big strides in the first half of the 20th century towards eliminating natural calamities like famine and fighting communicable diseases and vaccine preventable diseases of early childhood that took an overall heavy toll of life. Consequently, the expectancy of life at birth has improved and mortality for almost all ages has declined sharply.

4.1 Life expectancy for females which was 23.96 years at the beginning of the century has risen to around 58.1 years during in 1986-90 (Fig. III) Life expectancy for females which was slightly higher than that for males in the first half of the century lagged behind between 1961 to 1980. Thereafter since 1981, female life expectancy rose fast to overtake that of males. During 1986-90 life expectancy was 58.1 years for females as against 57.7 for males.

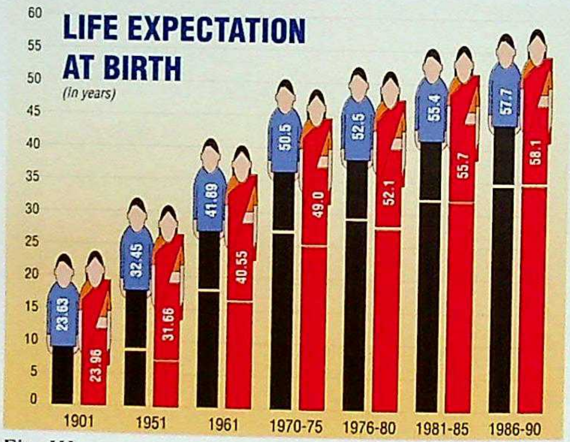


Fig. III

Note:- Figures for years upto 1970 are based on census data. From 1971 onwards figures are based on Sample Registration System.

Source: 1. Life Tables 1961-71, Census of India, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

2. SRS Based Abridged Life Table 1986-90, Occasional Paper No.1 of 1994, Registrar General and Census Commissioner India, New Delhi

Health, Nutrition and Mortality

5. The development of health facilities and establishment of Primary Health Centers in rural areas across the country during the fifties provided the much needed health services to the people. The Family Planning Programme was launched with the

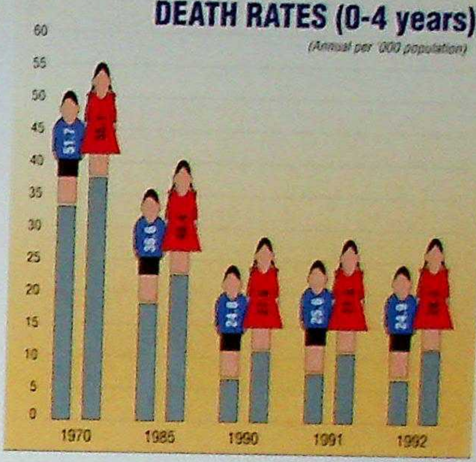
objective among others, of reducing the birth rate to the extent necessary to stabilise the population at a level consistent with the requirement of the national economy. Packaging maternal care, antenatal, perinatal and postnatal care of the mother and child, more intensive health care including special nutrition and immunization paid dividends. These measures contributed to further decline in mortality, bringing down the death rate to 19.0 during the decade 1961-71.

5.1 During the seventies, Government took a number of steps to improve the health status of the population, especially women. Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and Sub-Centres were expanded throughout the country for better reach of health services. By September 1993, there were 21,000 PHS 131,000 sub-centres and 2,000 Community Health Centres (CHCs) having beds with specialist facilities.

5.2 During 1975-76, a major initiative of the Government was the launching of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme. The coverage under the scheme has been increasing and by June, 1995, 17.81 million children and 3.82 million mothers were benefitting from the Scheme.

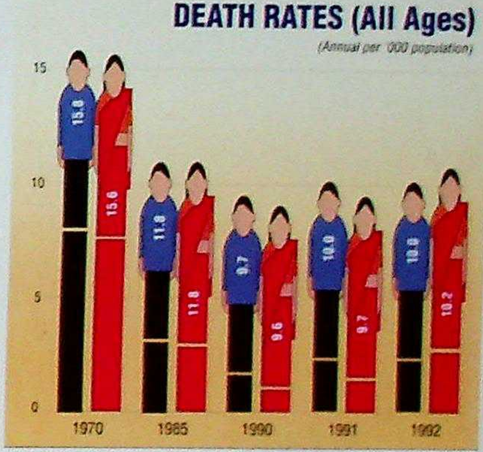
5.3 As part of the overall strategy for improving the health status of women and children in the country and reducing the maternal infant and child mortality - a programme called Child Survival and Safe Motherhood (CSSM) was launched in 1992-93.

5.4 The impact of these special interventions has reduced the death rates for both sexes. A significantly sharp decline may be noticed in the mortality/death rates amongst female children in the 0-4 age group from 55.1 in 1970 to 28.2 in 1992 (Fig. IV). The overall death rate of female population has also declined from 15.6 in 1970 to 9.7 in 1991 showing a slight rise to 10.2 in 1992. There is a further decline i.e. 9.3, in the death rate of overall population in 1993.



DEATH RATES (0-4 years)

(Annual per '000 population)



DEATH RATES (All Ages)

(Annual per '000 population)

Fig. IV

Source: SRS-Fertility and Mortality Indicators for respective years, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

5.5 These achievements in female health and mortality in the last decade are largely due to major interventions in the health sector. The immunization programme was universalised in a phased manner during the Seventh Five Year Plan period i.e. 1985-90. A Technology Mission mode was adopted to provide priority, urgency and better coordination. All the districts in the country were progressively covered by the programme by 1990. The reported coverage levels for 1993-94 was over 92% immunization in each of the three antigens viz, DPT, OPV and BCG, 88% in measles and 82% in TT for pregnant women.

5.6 The immediate impact of the Technology Mission for immunization has been the sharp fall in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in the latter half of the 1971-81 decade both for female and male children. The IMR for females has fallen from 131 in 1978 to 80 in 1992, while, IMR for their male counter part also shows a sharp decline from 123 to 79 during the same reference period. The IMR has had another sharp fall to 74 in 1993, wherein the gender disagreegated rates are not yet available. (Fig. V)

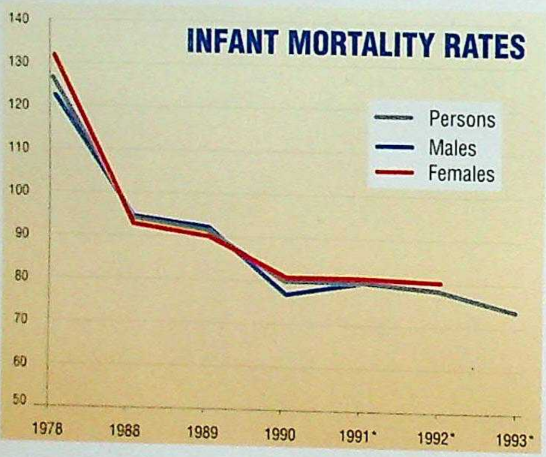


Fig. V

* Excludes Jammu & Kashmir

N.A. Not available as yet

Source: 1. SRS - Fertility and Mortality Indicators for respective years, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi

2. SRS - Bulletin, 1995.

5.7 The National Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of children in pursuance of the World Summit on Children and the Plan of Action for the Girl Child for the decade 1991-2000 being implemented during the decade are expected to further bring down the infant and child mortality rates for females.

THREE YEAR MOVING AVERAGE OF AGE-SPECIFIC DEATH RATES BY SEX

Age Group (In Years)	Male		Female	
	1979-81	1989-91	1979-81	1989-91
0-4'	41.0	26.3	44.8	28.9
5-9	3.4	2.4	4.2	3.0
10-14	1.7	1.4	1.7	1.5
15-19	1.9	1.7	2.8	2.5
20-24	2.4	2.4	3.7	3.2
25-29	2.4	2.7	3.9	3.0
30-34	3.6	3.2	3.8	2.8
35-39	4.8	4.0	4.5	3.4
40-44	6.8	5.5	5.5	4.1
45-49	9.4	9.0	7.4	5.9
50-54	14.9	13.3	10.8	9.0
55-59	23.2	20.7	17.2	14.0
60-64	35.5	31.6	28.4	23.2
65-69	52.3	47.1	41.2	37.6
70+	98.2	94.2	87.0	81.1
All Ages	12.4	10.0	12.7	9.8

Fig. VI

Source: Sample Registration System, 1979 to 1991, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

5.8 The age-specific death rates for female population declined for all age groups. Despite significant decline in mortality in overall population and simultaneous improvement in life expectancy at birth, there is still relatively quite a high proportion of deaths taking place amongst children of 0-4 years. The 0-4 mortality has been higher for female children during the eighties. Age-specific death rates also declined for males in almost all age groups but the decline in the case of females was greater. During 1979-81, female death rates were higher than male death rates for the younger age groups up to 30-34, whereas for the groups above 35 years a reverse trend is noticed. Due to the greater decline in female mortality during the decade by 1989-91, female death rates were higher than male death rates only upto the age group 25-29 and beyond age 30 female deaths were lower. Further, the gap between male and female death rates at younger ages upto 35-39 years is narrow while for ages beyond 40 years, the gap widened because of lower female death rates (Fig. VI).

MARITAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION

(Percent 1992)

Age Group (In Years)	Never Married			Married			W/D/S		
	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T
0-14	98.7	99.6	99.1	1.3	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
15-19	69.7	91.2	81.2	30.1	8.8	18.7	0.2	0.0	0.1
20-24	24.3	59.4	42.2	74.8	40.2	57.2	0.9	0.3	0.6
25-29	7.6	26.7	17.4	90.3	72.5	81.1	2.1	0.8	1.4
30-34	2.7	9.2	6.1	93.6	89.3	91.4	3.8	1.4	2.6
35-39	1.2	3.6	2.4	92.7	94.4	93.6	6.1	2.0	4.0
40-44	0.6	1.9	1.3	89.5	94.8	92.2	9.9	3.3	6.5
45-49	0.4	1.4	0.9	84.0	93.7	88.9	15.7	5.0	10.2
50-54	0.3	1.2	0.8	75.6	91.5	83.8	24.1	7.3	15.4
55-59	0.3	1.0	0.7	64.4	88.7	76.9	35.3	10.2	22.4
50+	0.3	1.1	0.7	54.3	84.4	69.5	45.4	14.6	29.9
60+	0.2	0.9	0.6	37.5	77.6	57.2	62.2	21.5	42.2
All Ages	55.3	46.1	50.8	44.2	45.7	43.9	2.5	8.2	5.3

Fig. VII

F-Female m-male T-Total W/D/S- Widowed/Divorce/Separated

Source: Sample Registration System, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi

Age at Marriage

6. Traditionally, attainment of puberty has played an important role in determining the age at marriage for girls. By the age of 25-29 years, more than, 90% of women were married in 1992. (Fig. VII). About 30% females who were married off at younger ages were still in their teens (i.e. 15-19 years).

6.1 The mean age at marriage for females which was around 13 years at the beginning of the century rose to 18.3 years by 1981 (Fig. VIII). The mean age at 'effective marriage' for females was 19.5 years in 1992. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1976 raised the minimum age at marriage of girls to 18 years from 15 years and for boys to 21 years. This was intended to prevent child marriages, early marriage of girls and consequent early pregnancies and thereby curtail fertility at young ages and birth of premature babies. Acquiring higher education and greater employment by women have also played a role in raising their age at marriage.

Fertility

7. The population of India has been growing at around 2% or more per annum since the decade ending 1961. Despite the fall in birth rates, the growth rate continued to rise during the fifties and sixties and has remained above 2% even upto the end of the last decade. The fall in birth rate was slower than the fall in death rate.

7.1 In the earlier decade of the century when fertility levels were very high, women unsure of child survival rates, bore a very heavy burden of repeated pregnancies. Child-bearing and child caring started from an early age of 15 years and continued all through the reproductive span of life upto 45 years of age. Age at marriage was low and rarely did some one remain unmarried. Neonatal and infant mortality were also very high resulting in a great deal of wastage in reproduction.

7.2 The crude birth rate (CBR) was very high, at 50 per thousand population, in the early part of the century. The pace of decline in birth rate has been relatively slow during the last two decades. It declined from 36.8 in 1970 to 28.7 in 1993. This pace of decline in birth rate was slower in urban areas (Fig. IX).

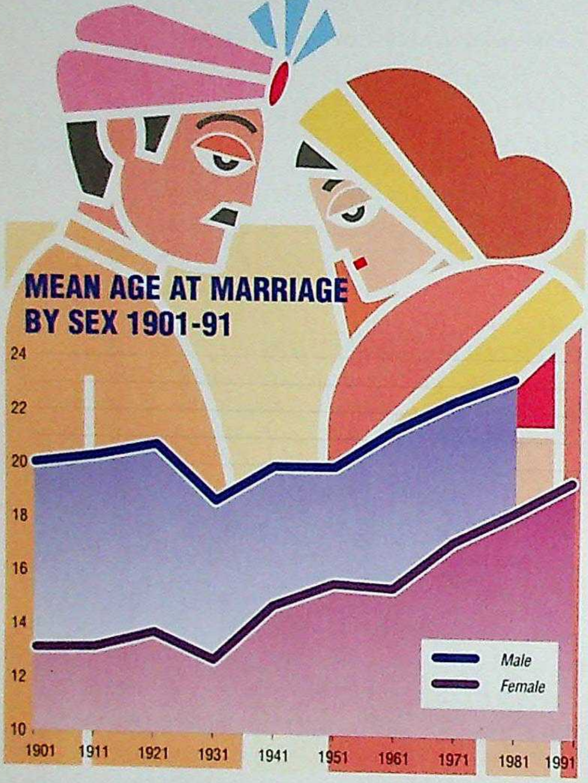


Fig. VIII

* Female age at Effective Marriage as per Sample Registration System for 1991 Census (excludes Jammu & Kashmir)

Note:

1. Figures relate to singulate mean age at marriage derived from Census data for all years upto 1981.
2. Figures for 1981 relate to India excluding Assam.
3. Figures for male age at effective marriage in 1991 Census is not yet available.

Source: Sample Registration System for respective years, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

7.3 The age-specific fertility rates declined for women in all age groups between 1981 and 1991, but not uniformly. The decline was small for the peak fertility ages 20-29. The reduction in fertility rate was significant for the age groups above 30. The reduction at ages above 30 years were substantial for rural areas between 1981-91 (Fig. X). This shrinking of the age span of fertility among urban women especially after 35 + years facilitated their joining other productive activities.

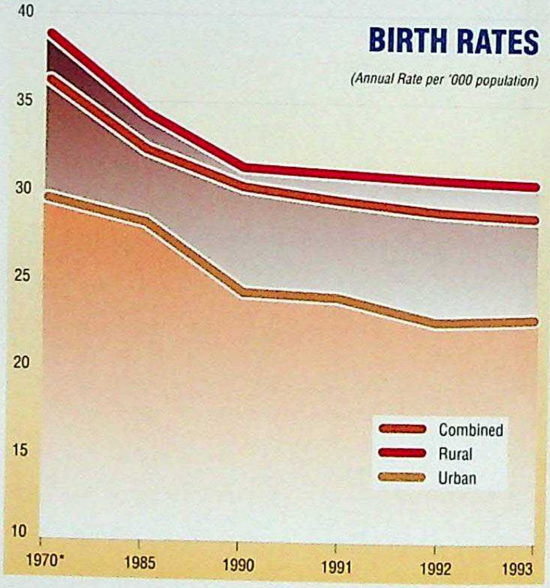


Fig. IX

* Country's birth rate estimates excluded Bihar and West Bengal for the year 1970.

Note (i) Data for 1990 and onwards exclude Jammu & Kashmir.

Source: SRS-Bulletins for respective years, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

7.5 Total fertility rate declined from 4.5 births in 1981 to 3.6 in 1991 leaving much scope for further reduction.

AGE-SPECIFIC FERTILITY RATES-1981 AND 1991

Age Group	1981 Rural	1981 Urban	1981 Combined	1991 Rural	1991 Urban	1991 Combined
15-19	98.2	58.1	90.4	84.5	46.1	76.1
20-24	261.3	195.0	246.9	244.6	200.7	234.0
25-29	244.9	187.0	232.1	202.3	158.7	191.3
30-34	180.4	117.8	167.7	128.6	81.6	117.0
35-39	112.6	60.1	102.5	75.9	37.4	66.8
40-44	48.4	24.5	44.0	35.3	14.9	30.6
45-49	22.0	9.1	19.6	14.0	5.3	12.1

Fig. X

Source: i. Sample Registration System, 1981 & 1991, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.
ii. Women in India: A Statistical Profile - 1988, Department of Women and child Development, Government of India, New Delhi.

Literacy

8. Despite intensive efforts of the State during the last four decades to improve the literacy levels, the achievement has not been completely satisfactory. Literacy has shown substantial increase from 18.33 in 1951 to 52.51 in 1991 (Fig. XI). The sex differentials in literacy however, have been throughout consistent and pronounced.

8.1 Over the four decades (1951-91), female literacy has however, gone up five times i.e. from 8.86 in 1951 to 39.29 in 1991. During the decade 1981-91 in particular, female literacy increased at a relatively faster pace (9.6%) than male literacy (7.5%).

8.2 There are wide regional variations too, ranging from near universal literacy in Kerala to 20.8% female literacy in Rajasthan. Rural-urban differentials in literacy are also wide. The literacy rate for rural areas is 44.7 against 73.1 for urban areas in 1991. Female literacy in rural areas at 30.6 is still very low and is less than half of the literacy rate in urban areas.

8.3 Girls' enrolment in schools has increased greatly and consistently at all levels (Fig. XII). At the primary stage, girls enrolment has increased nine-fold from 5.4 million in 1950-51 to 46.4 million in 1993-94 and at the upper primary/middle stage over thirty-fold from 0.5 million in 1950-51 to 15.7 million in 1993-94. At the high/higher secondary stage it increased from 0.2 million to 8.1 million over the same period. A substantial increase in school enrolment at the higher level indicates improvement in girls education which is very significant for their all-round development status.

8.4 Not only has girls' school enrolment increased, but the percentage of girls in total enrolment has also improved at all stages over the years (Fig. XII). Between 1950-51 and 1992-93 the percentage of enrolment of girls rose from 28.1% to 42.9% at the primary stage, from 16.1% to 39.3% at the middle/upper primary stage and from 14.3% to 34.6% at high/higher secondary stage. These trends show a fairly rapid advance at all levels.

8.5 Enrolment ratios, i.e. the percentage of enrolment to the population in the relevant age group have also risen for girls at both primary and upper primary levels (Fig. XIII). Girls' enrolment has increased by 73% at primary levels and by 92% at upper primary level during the period 1951-91.

8.6 Though school enrolment ratios have been rising high rate of drop-outs, particularly of girls still continues to be a major problem. During 1993-94, little more than 1/3 (39%) of the number of girls enrolling at the primary stage dropped out before completing primary level and about more than half of them (about 57%) dropped out before completing upper primary levels (Fig. XIV) and of the remaining 43% who reached the high/higher secondary stage, another 10% dropped out before completing the school stage. Thus, only about 32% of girls entering the primary stage reach the end of schooling. High drop out rates amongst girls are embedded in the socio-cultural and economic factors.

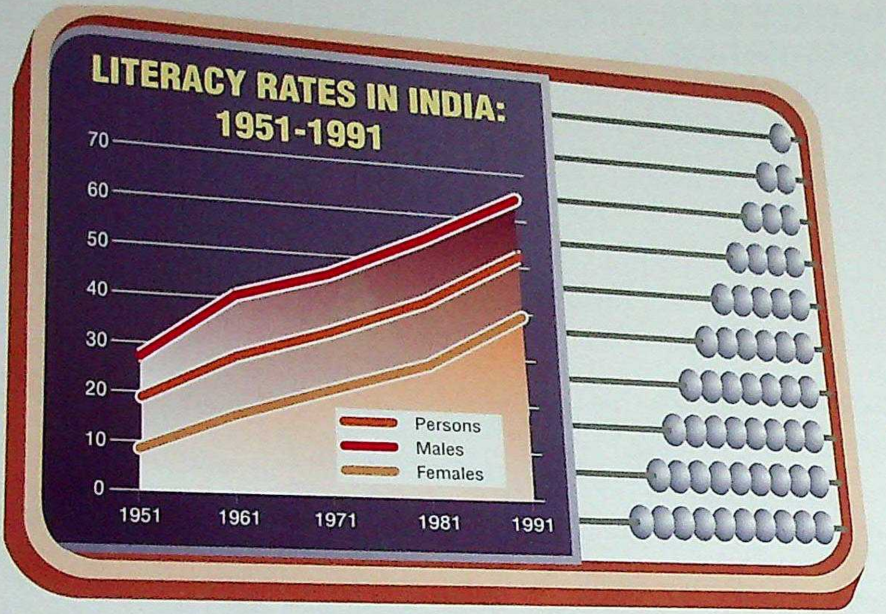


Fig. XI

Note: 1. Literacy rates for 1951-to 1981 relate to population aged five years and above. The rates for 1991 relate to population aged seven years and above.

2. The 1981 rates exclude Assam where 1981 Census could not be conducted and the 1991 rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir where the 1991 Census could not be conducted.

Source: Census of India 1991, Series-I India, Paper-2 of 1991, Final Population Totals, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

SCHOOL ENROLMENT BY STAGES/CLASSES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS (1951-1993)

(in million)

Year	Primary (I-V)			Middle (VI-VIII)			High/Hr. Sec.		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	13.8	5.4 (28.1)	19.2	2.6	0.5 (16.1)	3.1	1.3	0.2 (14.3)	1.5
1960-61	23.6	11.4 (32.6)	35.0	5.1	1.6 (23.6)	6.7	2.7	0.7 (18.2)	3.4
1970-71	35.7	21.3 (37.4)	57.0	9.4	3.9 (29.3)	13.3	4.9	1.7 (25.9)	6.6
1980-81	45.3	28.5 (38.6)	73.8	13.9	6.8 (32.9)	20.7	7.6	3.2 (29.4)	10.8
1990-91	58.1	41.0 (41.4)	99.1	20.9	12.4 (37.4)	33.3	14.0	6.9 (33.0)	20.9
1991-92(P)	59.2	42.4 (41.7)	101.6	21.4	13.0 (37.8)	34.4	14.2	7.0 (33.0)	21.2
1992-93(P)	60.5	44.9 (42.6)	105.4	23.7	15.0 (38.8)	38.7	15.0	7.7 (34.3)	22.7
1993-94(P)	61.8	46.4 (42.9)	108.2	24.2	15.7 (39.3)	39.9	15.3	8.1 (34.6)	23.4

Fig. XII

Note : Figures in parenthesis are percentages of girls' enrolment to total.

P - Provisional

Source: Selected Educational Statistics for respective years, Government of India, New Delhi.

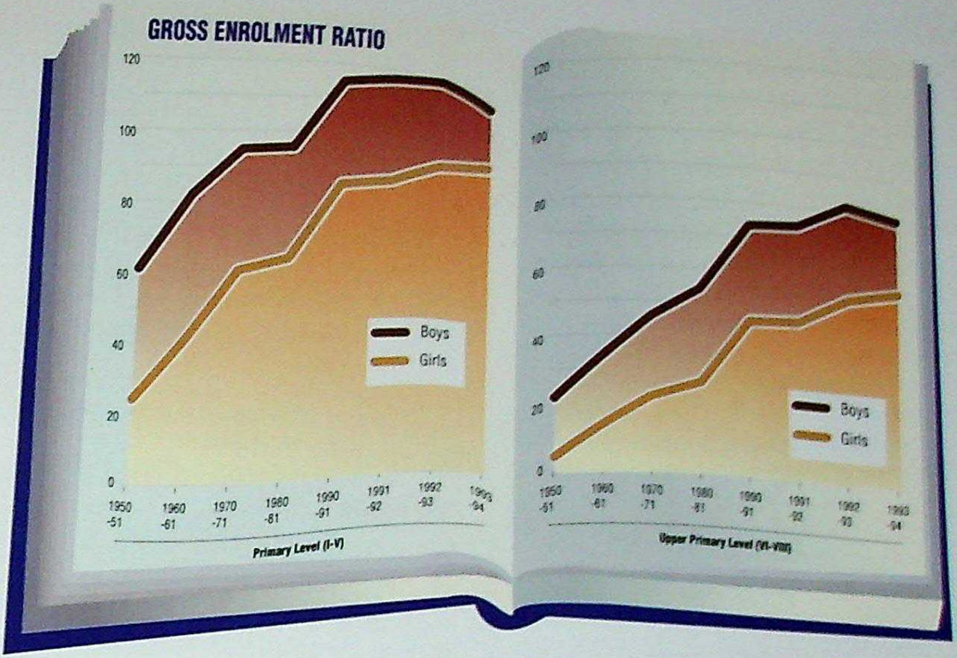
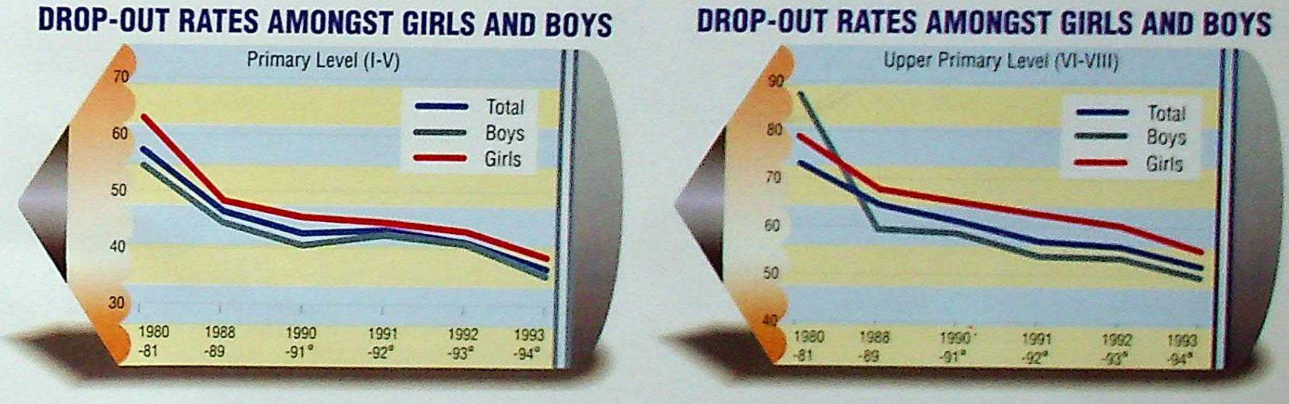

GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO

Fig. XIII

Source : Selected Educational Statistics (for respective years), Department of Education, Government of India, New Delhi


DROP-OUT RATES AMONGST GIRLS AND BOYS

DROP-OUT RATES AMONGST GIRLS AND BOYS

Fig. XIV

@ Provisional

Sources : 1. Education for All : The Indian Scene (Second Edition) Dept. of Education, 1993.
2. Department of Education, Govt. of India, New Delhi.

Employment

9. Expansion of employment opportunities has been an important objective of development planning in India. It is realised that larger and efficient use of available human resources is the most effective way to achieve poverty eradication, reduction in inequalities and sustenance of a reasonably high pace of economic growth.

9.1 Women contribute greatly to the economy. Employment of women is an index of their economic status in society, specially with reference to equality. According to the Census data, the work participation rate (i.e. the proportion of employed or total workers to population) of females steadily rose (Fig. XV) from 14.22% in 1971 to 19.67 in 1981 and to 22.27 in 1991. The rise in work participation of rural females has been even steeper from 15.92 in 1971 to 26.79 in 1991. The rise in work participation of urban females over the two decades is somewhat less impressive. During the 1991 Census, conscious efforts were made to count women workers more completely and remove their invisibility. This could be one of the reasons for the increase reflected in the work participation rates between 1981-1991.

9.2 Out of the 22.27% female work participation in 1991, main workers contributed 16.03% and marginal workers 6.24%. While participation of main workers increased between 1981 and 1991 both in rural and urban areas, marginal work participation increased only in rural areas but remained unchanged in urban areas at around 1%. It is significant to point out that women constituted 90% of the total marginal workers. Regional variations are wide - the female total work participation rate ranging from as high as 34% to as low as 4% among the major States.

9.3 The distribution of female main workers by industrial categories (Fig. XVI) shows a change in the pattern of activity of females between 1981 and 1991. Cultivators among main workers have increased from 33 to more than 34% in 1991 and agricultural labourers have declined from 46 to almost 45%. This shift is seen both in rural and urban areas.

WORK PARTICIPATION RATES

(India 1971-91)

Years	*Rural/Urban*	*Persons*	*Males*	*Females*
1971	Total	34.17	52.75	14.22
	Rural	35.33	53.78	15.92
	Urban	29.61	48.88	7.18
1981	Total	36.70	52.62	19.67
	Rural	38.79	53.77	23.06
	Urban	29.99	49.06	8.31
1991	Total	37.50	51.61	22.27
	Rural	40.09	52.58	26.79
	Urban	30.16	48.92	9.19

Fig. XV

Note 1. Excludes Assam and Jammu & Kashmir where the 1981 and 1991 Census, respectively, could not be held.

2. 1971 figures are totals of workers and non-workers with secondary work whereas, 1981 and 1991 figures are totals of main and marginal workers.

Source: 1 Census of India 1991, Series-1, India Paper 3 of 1991, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

9.4 In the household manufacturing industry, the percentage of female main workers has decreased from 4.6% in 1981 to 3.5% in 1991. The corresponding decrease in urban areas is from 10.4% to 7.5%. Another significant change is the increase in percentage of main workers in "Other Services" from 6.9% to 8.3% and the corresponding change in urban areas from 37% to 40%.

9.5 Women's employment in the organised sector has revealed significant increase from 1.9 million in 1971 to 4.0 million in 1993, constituting 14.6% of the total employment of 27.18 million. Of these 2.47 million women i.e. about 62% were employed in the public sector and 1.6 million i.e. 38% in the private sector (Fig. XVII). As compared to women in the organised sector, the representation of men is almost six times more. About 56% of women's employment in the organised sector is in community, social and personal services, 16% each in transport, storage and communication and financing, insurance, real estate and banking services. Of the total employment of women, the organised sector employment forms only 4%, whereas, for men, organised sector employment constitutes 10% of total employment.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE MAIN WORKERS BY INDUSTRIAL CATEGORY IN INDIA, 1981 & 1991

Industrial Category	1981 Total	1981 Rural	1981 Urban	1991 Total	1991 Rural	1991 Urban
Cultivators	33.09	36.94	4.63	34.22	38.58	5.13
Agricultural Labourers	46.34	50.36	16.65	44.93	49.32	15.61
Livestock, Forestry Fishing, Hunting, Plantations and Allied Activities	1.83	1.84	1.77	1.60	1.61	1.52
Mining & Quarrying	0.35	0.31	0.69	0.34	0.29	[illegible]
Manufacturing, Processing Servicing & Repairs						
a) Household Industry	4.57	3.77	10.44	3.53	2.93	[illegible]
b) Other than Household Industry	3.60	2.11	14.59	3.88	2.34	[illegible]
Construction	0.87	0.56	3.10	0.66	0.27	[illegible]
Trade & Commerce	2.04	1.12	8.92	2.26	1.10	10.01
Transport, Stroge & Communications	0.37	0.11	2.24	0.32	0.08	1.94
Other Services	6.94	2.88	36.97	8.26	3.48	40.14

Fig. XVI

Note: Excludes Assam and Jammu & Kashmir where the 1981 and 1991 census, could not be held.

Source: Census of India 1991, Final Population Totals, Series-1, India, Paper 2 of 1992, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi, 1993.

9.6 An overall representation of women in the labour force still remains low for various reasons such as change in the definition of 'workers' since 1981 Census. Low percentage of workers may also reflect a higher capacity of the working population to support a large number of the dependents and may be due to growing magnitude of unemployment in general.

9.7 Unemployment, according to the Planning Commission, measures involuntary idleness. It does not include invisible unemployment or under employment, that is the situation with very low levels of productivity and income. The structure of the work force with dominance of self employment and the primary sector, where work sharing is common, also tends to depress unemployment rates. A few salient features of the unemployment situation in India relate to higher incidence of unemployment in urban areas as compared to rural areas.

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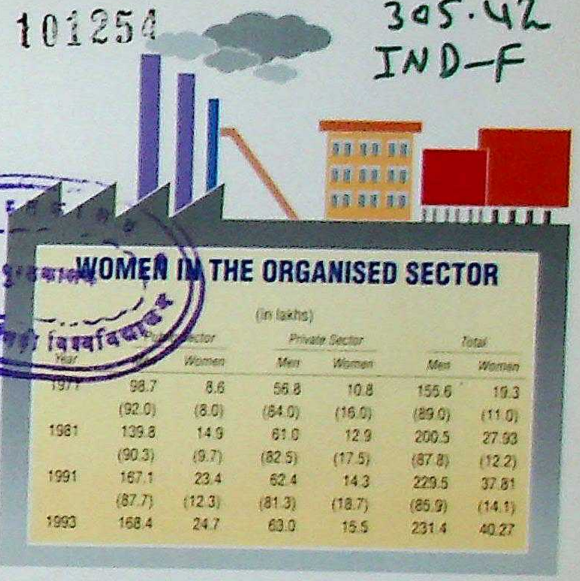


WOMEN IN THE ORGANISED SECTOR

(in lakhs)

Year	Public Sector Men	Public Sector Women	Private Sector Men	Private Sector Women	Total Men	Total Women
[illegible]	98.7	8.6	56.8	10.8	155.6	19.3
	(92.0)	(8.0)	(84.0)	(16.0)	(89.0)	(11.0)
1981	139.8	14.9	61.0	12.9	200.5	27.93
	(90.3)	(9.7)	(82.5)	(17.5)	(87.8)	(12.2)
1991	167.1	23.4	62.4	14.3	229.5	37.81
	(87.7)	(12.3)	(81.3)	(18.7)	(85.9)	(14.1)
1993	168.4	24.7	63.0	15.5	231.4	40.27

Fig. XVII

Note : Figures in parenthesis is are percentages

Source: DGE&T, Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India, New Delhi.

9.8 A matter of great concern is the unemployment rates for female workers in recent years. The rate of unemployment is more significant for urban females at 4.7% compared to 0.3% for rural females as shown in Fig. XVII. The same trend is visible for current weekly status of unemployment, which stood at 2.1% for rural females and 5.3% for urban females in 1990-91. The unemployment rates for current status also presents a similar trend, i.e. increasing for urban females even more than urban males and almost stagnant for rural females.

9.9 At the end of 1994, the number of women on the live register of the Employment Exchanges in the country was 80.90 lakhs as against 78.50 lakhs at the end of 1993.

9.10 Several factors account for this situation. Among these are absence of appropriate skills. Women also tend to get easily displaced by new technologies and are either pushed out or pushed down when job requirements call for skilled and trained persons. With the introduction of new macro economic policies skill and vocational training for women assume key importance.

9.11 Other more recent indicators of human development and gender empowerment such as participation in economic and political structures are similarly adverse for women. These are taken up in the following chapters.

9.12 Making women equal partners in the national development processes and equipping them to make informed choices in order to actualise their self-worth through empowerment are goals to which the Government is committed. There is a long way to go, but the endeavour is ceaseless.

Based on contributions received from the Core Group headed by Dr. Sarala Gopalan.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY SEX

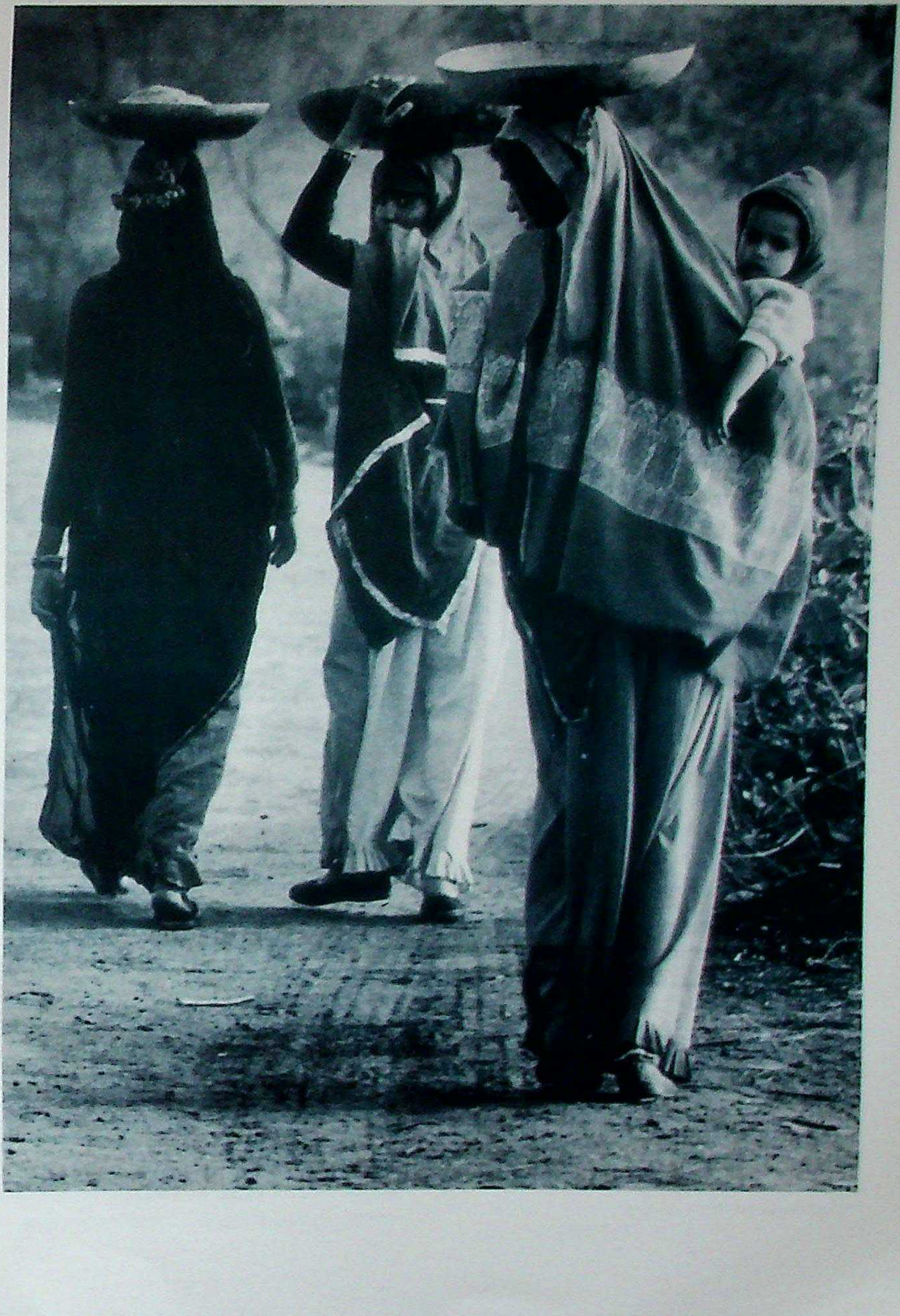
	Male			*Female*		
Year	*Usual status (UPS)*	*Usual status adjusted (UPSS)*	*Current Weekly Status*	*Usual status (UPS)*	*Usual status adjusted (UPSS)*	*Current Weekly Status*
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
			RURAL			
1972-73	NA	12	30	NA	5	55
1977-78	22	13	36	55	20	41
1983	21	14	37	14	7	43
1987-88	28	18	42	35	24	44
1989-90	16	13	26	8	6	21
1990-91	13	11	22	4	3	21
			URBAN			
1972-73	NA	48	60	NA	60	92
1977-78	65	54	71	178	124	109
1983	59	51	67	69	49	75
1987-88	61	52	66	85	62	92
1989-90	44	39	45	39	27	40
1990-91	45	45	51	54	47	53

Fig. XVIII

N.A. Not available as the data collected in 1972-73 Survey relate to only usual status adjusted.

* Unemployed per 1000 persons in Labour force.

Source: Sarvekshana, July-Sept. 1992.



POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Constitutional and Legal Rights of Women

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralising the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them.

1.1 The Preamble to the Constitution resolves to secure to all its citizens, justice, social, economic and political, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all, fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation.

1.2 The Constitution guarantees Fundamental Rights to all Indian citizens. The Constitution also enumerates in the Directive Principles of State Policy the major goals of a welfare state with gender equity as a core objective. While the Fundamental Rights are enforceable in the Courts of justice, the State is charged with the duty to apply the Directive Principles in making laws.

1.3 Article 14 confers equal rights and opportunities on men and women in the political, economic and social spheres. While Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc, a provision under Article 15(3) enables the State to allow affirmative discrimination in favour of women. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment. The State also imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

1.4 To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

1.5 Although all laws are not gender specific, the major provisions affect women significantly. Amendments have been periodically carried out to keep pace with emerging demands. They include, among others, the following :

- **The Special Marriage Act, 1954**
- **The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**
- **The Hindu Succession Act, 1956**
- **The Family Courts Act, 1954**
- **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983**
- **The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986**
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act,1961 (amended in 1984 and 1986)**
- **The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1976**
- **The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976**
- **The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986**
- **The Plantation Labour Act, 1951**
- **The Employees State Insurence Act, 1948**
- **The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976**
- **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971**
- **The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986**

1.6 The legal edific thus effectively affirms and promotes the principles of equity and equality of women and takes care of their special needs.

Five Year Plans

2 The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) was mainly welfare oriented as far as women's issues were concerned. The Central Social Welfare Board

(CSWB), undertook a number of welfare measures through the voluntary sector.

2.1 In the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) efforts were geared to organise "Mahila Mandals" (women's groups) at grass-roots levels to ensure better implementation of welfare schemes.

2.2 The Third, Fourth and other Interim Plans (1961-74) accorded high priority to women's education. Measures to improve maternal and child health services, and supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers were also introduced.

2.3 In the Fifth Plan (1974-78), there was a shift in the approach from 'welfare' to 'development' as the scope of social welfare was enlarged to cope with several problems of the family and the role of women. The new approach integrated welfare with developmental services.

2.4 The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) as stated earlier was a landmark as women's development received recognition as a specific development sector and a separate chapter on it was, for the first time, included in the Plan document. The Plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment.

2.5 In the Seventh Plan (1985-90), development programmes for women were continued, with the objective of raising their economic and social status and bringing them into the mainstream of national development. A very significant step therein was to identify and promote 'beneficiary-oriented programmes' which extended direct benefits to women.

2.6 The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), promises to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women. Special programmes are to be implemented to complement the general development programmes. The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment are to be monitored vigilantly. Women must be enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. This approach of the Eighth Plan marks a definite shift from 'development' to 'empowerment' of women.

2.7 In order to meet the needs of women and children, there has been a progressive increase in the Plan outlays over the last four developmental decades. The outlay of Rs. 4 crores in the First Plan (1951-56) has gone upto Rs. 2000 crores in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97).

Policies and Programmes

3. Within the broad goals laid down by the Five Year Plans, Government has consciously fostered an enabling policy environment in which women's concerns are properly reflected, articulated and seriously addressed.

3.1 As part of this effort many policy instruments have been brought-forth over the years. In addition to women specific policies which are listed below there are important women-related policies like the National Policy on Education (1986), The National Health Policy (1983), the National Population Policy (1993) and the National Nutrition Policy (1993).

3.2 One of the most significant documents to emerge from the International Decade for Women was the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (FLS). It was intended to provide a blue print for action to advance the status of women in national and international, economic, social, cultural and legal spheres by the year 2000 A.D. The document was divided into five sections dealing with the equality, development, peace, areas of special concern and international/regional cooperation. Each section identified obstacles and specific measures to implement relevant strategies. The full participation and integration of women in all areas of society was stressed as well as the close relationship between the three goals of equality, development and peace.

3.3 Government has responded to the FLS in tune with its own Constitutional and developmental paradigms. An important step taken in this direction was to revitalise the machinery at the national level by setting up a separate Department of Women and Child Development under the newly created Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Women's Welfare and Development Bureau under the erstwhile Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare thus became part of the new Department and continues to function as the nodal agency for the advancement of women. In 1990 by an Act of Parliament, the National Commission for Women was set up with the specific charter to monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal rights provided to women and thus strengthen the national machinery (*Details of the institutional set up are available in the chapter 5 on "Strengthening the National Machinery for Women's Development"*).

National Perspective Plan for Women (1988)

4. The National Perspective Plan for Women (NPP) was drawn up to facilitate mainstreaming of women's issues in policies and programmes. It contains a set of recommendations aimed at the welfare and development of women, guided by principles and directives germane to existing development parameters. It is linked to national targets determined for the end of the century in respect of certain standard development indicators and is the first comprehensive report since 1974 on women and development in India.

4.1 The NPP has recognised the need to highlight women's concerns and stated that a parallel substream of women's development, even if possible, would only perpetuate discrimination and subordination. It has envisioned an alternative strategy which provides not just some additional space to women but creates for them a democratic, egalitarian, secular and co-operative social structure. Reviewing the gains of the four decades of planning, it has flagmarked the initiatives required and set out a series of action points relating to sectors of rural development, health, legislation, political participation, education, employment, support services, communication and voluntary action. Some of these have already been implemented.

Shramshakti - the Report of the National Commission for Self Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector (1988)

5. The Shramshakti Report, for the first time, underlined the critical contribution of the marginalised poor women in both rural and urban areas, to the growth of the formal economy. The situation of women in the informal sector, including self-employed and wage labour, paid and unpaid workers, as well as contractual employees was studied by the Commission. Among the significant findings, based on observations and discussions with Governmental and non-Governmental Organisations and social activists, was that one third of all households were solely supported by women and in another third, over 50% of the earnings were contributed by women. Further, 94% of all women were found to be working in the unorganised sector such as agriculture, dairying, animal husbandry and fisheries. One of the key factors underlying the exploitation of women workers was lack of organisation in the informal sector. Based on detailed analyses of such findings, many valuable recommendations were submitted in the Report. These included, recognition of women's work as home-makers, as social/economic producers, enlarging the definition of women-workers in all subsequent data collection efforts to embrace all paid and unpaid work performed at the home and outside, setting up of an exclusive credit - body for poor and self - employed women and linking all training programmes to employment with the objective of increasing the remuneration and improving living conditions of poor women. Some of these recommendations have already been operationalised.

Report of the National Expert Committee on Women Prisoners (1986)

6. The Expert Committee studied the conditions of women prisoners in the criminal correctional justice system and made a series of recommendations suggesting legislation, custodial, correctional and prison reforms relating to women prisoners. Implementation of these recommendations by the Central and State Governments is being monitored by the National Commission for Women.

The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)

7. India is a signatory to the World Declaration on the survival, protection and development of children and has drawn up the Plan of Action for implementing it in the 1990s. In addition to this, another decadal Plan of Action exclusively for the girl-child, was prepared in 1992, to take care of her gender-specific needs.

7.1 To achieve the goals laid down therein, a number of initiatives have been launched. They include enactment of legislation to ban sex-determination tests so as to prevent female foeticide, conduct of a survey of the problem of female infanticide in 9 States, mounting of multi-media campaigns to develop a positive image of the girl-child, compilation of gender-disaggregated data and detailed bibliography on studies related to the girl-child etc. Equally important is the fact that the State Governments are also drawing up Plans of Action to cater to local requirements and ensure the holistic development of the girl-child.

Reservation for Women in Grass-root Level Democratic Institutions (1993)

8. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 mark historic events in the advancement of Indian women as they ensure 1/3 of total seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies, in rural areas and urban areas. In the rural areas, about 1 million women are going to emerge as leaders/decision makers at the grass-roots level and enter into public life through the existing 0.25 million bodies. Of these, about 75,000 will be Chairpersons at the village, block and district levels. Women have thus been brought to the centre-stage in the nation's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions. The groundswell that is likely to build up as a result will undoubtedly influence of development and impact on the lives of women.

8.1 The process of election to these bodies is continuing throughout the country and will be completed shortly. A massive country-wide training programme has been launched since 1993 to give leadership training to the women elected representatives.

Poverty Eradication Programmes

9. Under various poverty eradication programmes of the rural development sector, 40% of benefits have been reserved for women below the poverty line. Families living 'below poverty line' are those whose annual income is about Rs. 6000-11,000. (*Details are available in the Chapter 6 on "Women in Extreme Poverty"*).

Mahila Samriddhi Yojana (MSY) (1993)

10. The MSY is a major initiative to empower women by raising their economic status. It aims to promote amongst rural women the habit to save and improve their financial assets,apart from enabling them to exercise greater control over their own household resources. The scheme offers facilities of small deposits, with attractive rates of interest, through the network of post offices. About 77 lakh accounts with a total deposit of Rs. 72.67 crores have been opened so far.

National Credit Fund for Women (1993)

11. To redress the grievances of poor and assetless women relating to non-accessibility to formal credit systems, the National Credit Fund for Women called "Rashtriya Mahila Kosh" has

been set up. It had an initial corpus of Rs.310 million. It will extend credit to poor women at reasonable rates of interest through non-Governmental Organisations working in the rural areas. So far 47 projects have been supported with a total credit of Rs. 8.88 crores at the grass-roots level, benefitting around 60,000 women. The ultimate objective of the Fund is to help develop a national network of credit services for women in the informal sector to boost self-employment, micro-enterprises and small businesses.

Support to Training and Employment Programmes (STEP)

12. Launched in 1987, STEP aims to upgrade the skills of poor and assetless women and provide employment to women in the traditional sectors such as agriculture, dairying, fisheries, sericulture, handlooms and handicrafts. In addition to training and employment support, STEP's three special features are 'gender sensitisation', 'women in development inputs' and 'support services'. Since inception the programme has provided employment to around 1.52 lakh women. The Eighth Five Year Plan has earmarked Rs. 57.00 crores to provide employment to 50,000 women. So far, dairying has received the maximum support followed by handlooms, handicrafts and sericulture.

Training-cum-Employment-cum-Production Centres

13. Under this programme financial assistance is provided to public sector undertakings, corporations, autonomous bodies and voluntary organisations to train women in non-traditional trades and ensure employment to them in these areas. Priority is given for training in electronics, electrical equipment, watch assembly, computer programming, printing and binding, handlooms, garment manufacturing, food processing, hotel management, fashion technology, beauty culture, tourism management, office management etc. In the Eighth Plan, there is a provision of Rs. 20.00 crores to train/upgrade skills for about 20,000 women.

Socio-Economic Programme (SEP)

14. Implemented by the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), the programme of training and employment caters to needy women such as widows, deserted wives, economically backward and handicapped women. In the Eighth Plan, Rs. 25.00 crore is available to assist 70,000 women. SEP takes care of both literate/semi-literate and illiterate women. Trades promoted under this programme include traditional, agro-based industries and non-traditional trades.

Condensed Courses of Education and Vocational Training for Adult Women (CCE & VT)

15. This scheme, started in 1958 and recast in 1975 by the Central Social Welfare Board provides new vistas of employment through continuing education and vocational training for those who are school drop-outs. In the Eighth Plan, Rs. 40.00 crores is available to conduct 4,500 courses for 1.35 lakh beneficiaries.

Monitoring of Beneficiary Oriented Schemes (BOS) for Women

16. 27 beneficiary oriented schemes which are women specific are monitored by the Prime Minister's Office. Development indicators relating to the goal of 'equality for women' in the priority programmes of the Government are also kept under close watch. While such monitoring focusses attention on gender perspectives, the process itself helps in consciousness raising within Government.

Gender Sensitisation and Awareness Generation

17. The treatment meted out to women and girls in different modes of human communication, mirrors the prevailing biases towards them. Government attaches great importance to efforts which trigger

changes in societal attitudes. An integrated campaign projecting a positive image of both women and the girl child through electronic, print and film media is the most important component of the communication strategy. A large number of TV spots, documentary films, radio programmes with positive messages about the girl child and women, have been produced for wide publicity. Awareness generation programmes and programmes to check atrocities against women are funded by Government, too.

17.1 To sensitise planners, policy makers the enforcement machinery and development agencies, a country-wide gender sensitisation programme has been launched since 1991. So far, the major States of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Delhi have been covered.

Gender Sensitisation of 1991 Census

18 For the first time in India's demographic history, an attempt was made to capture women's work in the informal sector in the 1991 Census. Provisional data on 'Workers and their Distribution' has shown a substantial increase in female work participation during the 1991 Census compared to that of 1981.

Support Services

19 The national machinery has spread a wide network of support services for women and children belonging to the weaker sections. These support services represent an important plank for the empowerment of women as they reduce the burden of child care and other employment related problems. They include hostels for working women to provide greater mobility to them in the employment market. 692 hostels with attached day care centres for 45,300 working women have been sanctioned. 12,500 creches for children of working mothers engaged as casual, migrant, agricultural and construction labourers as well as ailing mothers have been set up.

19.1 A National Creche Fund was created in 1993 with a corpus of Rs.19.90 crores to meet the growing demand for creches.

19.2 Short Stay Homes for women and girls in difficult circumstances have also been established.

19.3 In the field of child development and maternal care, the Government administers the world's largest programme called the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme. Apart from caring for children below 6 years, the scheme also supports pregnant women and nursing mothers living in rural areas and urban slums. At present there are 3908 ICDS projects in the country. For the first time a special intervention has been devised for adolescent girls using the ICDS infra-structure. The scheme focusses on school drop-outs aged 11 to 18 and attempts to meet their special needs of nutrition, health, education, literacy, recreation and skill development. The scheme has been sanctioned in 507 blocks and when fully implemented will benefit 45,000 girls.

Legal Literacy Manuals (LLMs)

20. Legal Literacy Manuals published by Governemnt in 1992 are expected to educate women about the laws concerning their basic rights. These Manuals have been written in a simple and illustrated format so that even semi-literates and neo-literates are able to comprehend them. They cover a wide range of subjects, namely, laws relating to working women, child labour, contract labour, adoption and maintenance, Hindu, Muslim and Christian marriage laws including right to property, issues of dowry, rape, and details of police procedures.

20.1 The Manuals have been disseminated to States and non-Governmental Organisations and are being translated into all the 14 official Indian languages.

National Resource Centre for Women

21. Government has finalised a proposal to set-up a National Resource Centre for Women which will act as an apex body for promoting and incorporating gender perspectives in policies and programmes of the Government. A pilot project to test the concepts and methodologies underlying the National Resource Centre has been successfully implemented recently.

Voluntary Action

22. India has a rich tradition of selfless voluntary action. While Government's interventions for women's empowerment are largely through non-Governmental Organisations, the initiatives that the latter have themselves developed, are rich and diverse. These efforts have often demonstrated the success of alternative models in the field of credit for poor women, health, awareness generation, literacy, participatory rural appraisal involving women and organising women's self-employment groups in traditional and non-traditional sectors of the economy There are over 12,000 organisations at the Block, Districts and State levels. These are actively supported by a vibrant women's movement.

Strategies During the Nineties

23. During the Nineties, the strategy has been to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women and special programmes with greater gender sensitivity are implemented to complement the general development programmes. The flow of benefits to women in the core sectors of education, health and employment are being closely monitored as these contribute a great deal towards mainstreaming women into national development. Employment and income generation activities including self-employment with training for upgradation of skills are seen as major interventions.

24. The strategy recognises that Government responses to the problems of women often tend to be sectoral and therefore fragmented. The needs of women, however, are holistic. Therefore, this strategy focusses on an integrated approach for providing basic services. It also accepts women as active participants in the process of development. Such participation requires women to be mobilised into groups at the grass-roots level, so that they can ensure co-ordination of Government programmes and articulate their hopes and aspirations.

25. Policy and programme approaches have been derived from an understanding of women's role in development at particular points of time. The present empowerment approach sees the importance of using practical gender needs as the basis on which to build a more secure support structure and a means through which more strategic interests of women may be reached. The impact of various developmental policies, programmes and institutional mechanisms is to be gauged from the perceptible improvement in the socio-economic status of women in country. The challenge before Government, the women's movement and the voluntary sector is to translate this concern into a wider societal awareness which can then shape praxis at all levels.

Based on publications of the Planning Commission and Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL MACHINERY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The Government continuously strives to provide institutional support to the nation's efforts for the advancement of women, with a special focus on girl children. At the national level, the Department of Women and Child Development acts as the machinery within Government to guide, coordinate and review the efforts of both Governmental and non-Governmental Organisations.

2. The Central Social Welfare Board, which is an apex organisation at the national level, acts as an umbrella organisation networking through State Welfare Boards and, through them, thousands of voluntary organisations.

3. The National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD), assists the Department in the areas of research and training.

4. Recently, the National Commission for Women was set-up as a high level statutory body to over-see the implementation of Constitutional and legal safeguards and the protection of women's rights and privileges. (See Box)

5. In 1993, the Department promoted and set up the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Credit Fund for Women), an autonomous organisation designated to promote the flow of developmental credit to poor women in the informal sector through the intermediation of non-Governmental Organisations. Women's Cells set-up in the Central Ministries and Departments of Labour, Industry, Rural Development, Science & Technology work to develop strong linkages between the national machinery and the women-related Ministries/Departments.

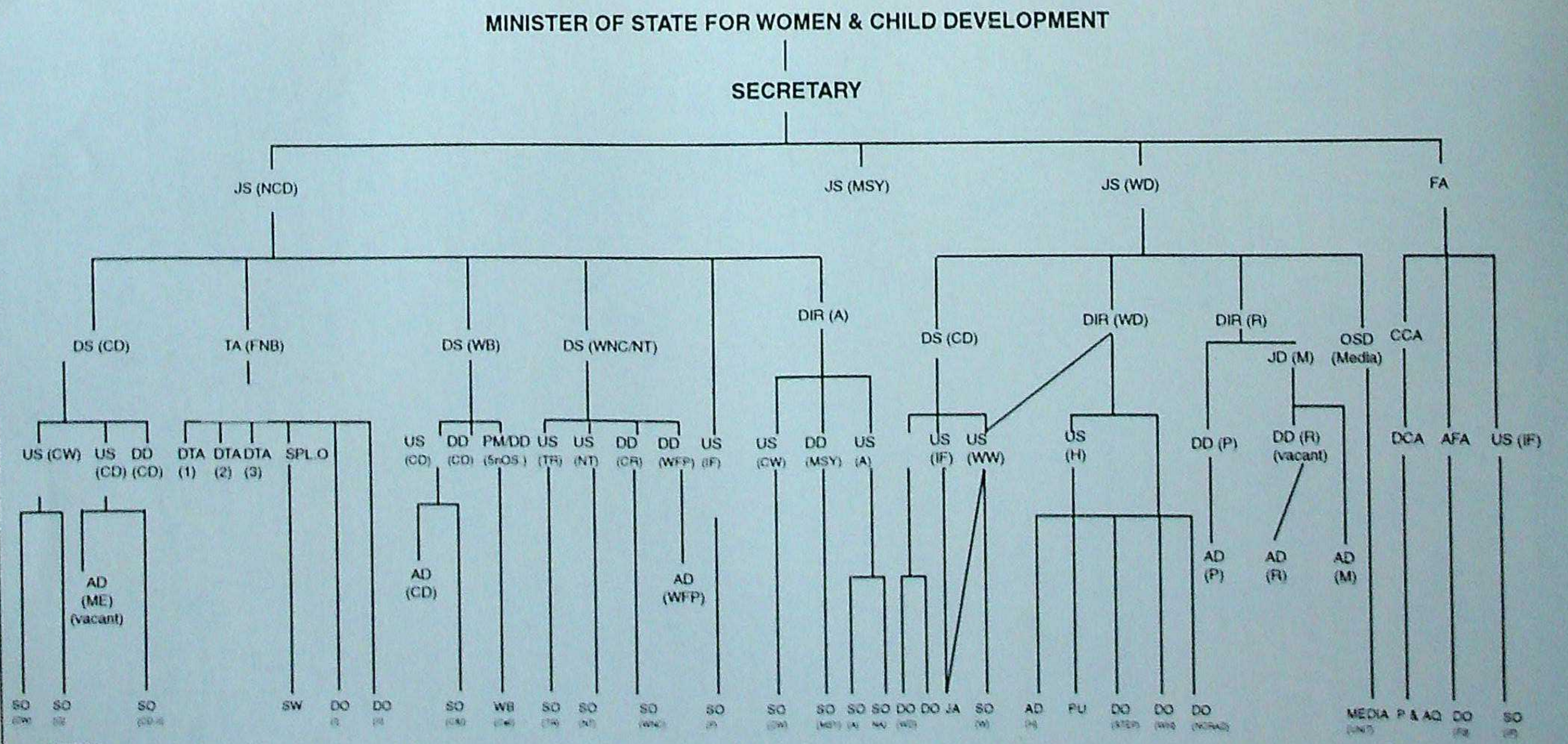
6. As the largest democracy in the world, India has enjoyed the freedom to continuously experiment with a number of forms and modes of organisations and structures to achieve women's equality. The earliest of these were initiated in the post Independence period in 1947, long before the International Women's Decade had globalised the concept of a National Machinery for Women's Advancement. The State is seen as the prime mover in bringing about social change and it is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the Fundamental Rights of equality of the sexes and absence of discrimination on the basis of sex. The earliest institutional structure that was set up by the Government of India was the Central Social Welfare Board which was outside the Governmental framework to function primarily through the voluntary sector.

7. Many of the formations which came later on, however, were embedded within larger Governmental structures. Simultaneously, there were Committees, Boards and Commissions, too, which were predominantly "non-official", though constituted by and retaining a vital link with the State.

8. The philosophy and practice of State-sponsored welfare often tended to limit the growth of people's participation. The women's movement has, however, been a major force, making specific contributions to the evolutionary processes of social development. If any trend can be said to be clearly discernible, now it is the lessening of the polarities between what is considered "the Government" and "non-Government", with an unmistakable movement towards interdependence. Heterogeneity, pluralism and diversity have been abiding features of the Indian polity. True to this form, the Indian women's movement has reflected a variety of ethnic, religious, ideological and economic interests. This has helped in highlighting the specificities of the Indian woman's situation. (*For a sketch of the women's movement please see Chapter 18*).

9. The replacement of institutional structures and formations from time to time, their modifications, renewal, as well as their organic growth have come about as responses to emerging concepts on women's issues through close interaction with the women's movement. In the last four decades, development planning for women has straddled principles spanning welfare, development, equity, efficiency and empowerment.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART OF THE DEPTT. OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT


MINISTER OF STATE FOR WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT
SECRETARY
JS (NCD)
JS (MSY)
JS (WD)
FA
DS (CD)
TA (FNB)
DS (WB)
DS (WNC/NT)
DIR (A)
DS (CD)
DIR (WD)
DIR (R)
OSD (Media)
CCA
JD (M)
US (CW)
US (CD)
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DTA (1)
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US (NT)
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US (CW)
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US (A)
US (IF)
US (WW)
US (H)
DD (P)
DD (R) (vacant)
DCA
AFA
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AD (ME) (vacant)
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DO (STEP)
DO (WH)
DO (NORAD)
MEDIA (UNIT)
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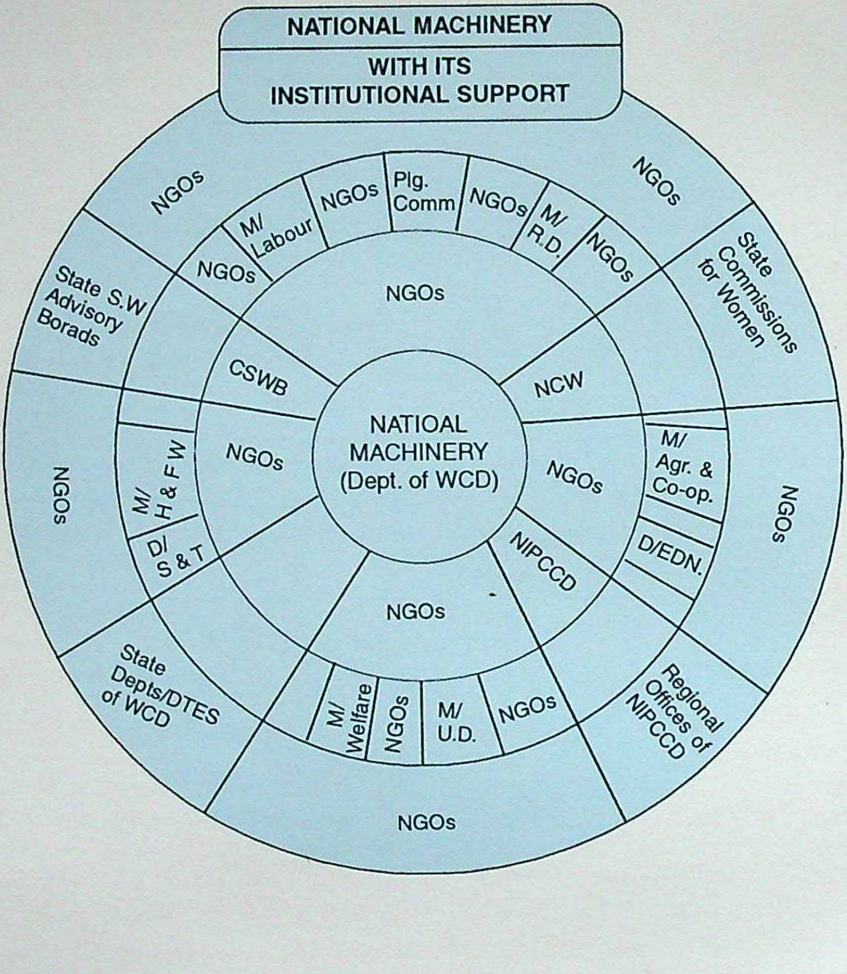
LEGEND

A	Administration
AD	Assistant Director
AFA	Assistant Financial Adviser
ATA	Assistant Technical Adviser
C	Coordination
CCA	Chief Controller of Accounts
CD	Child Development
CR	Creches
CSWB	Central Social Welfare Board
CW	Child Welfare
DCA	Deputy Controller of Accounts
DD	Deputy Director
DDO	Drawing & Disbursing Officer
DO	Desk Officer
DTA	Deputy Technical Adviser
FNB	Food & Nutrition Board
H	Hindi
DS	Deputy Secretary
FA	Financial Adviser
G	General
IF	Internal Finance
IMY	Indira Mahila Yojana
JA	Junior Analyst
JD	Joint Director
JS	Joint Secretary
JTA	Joint Technical Adviser
ME	Monitoring & Evaluation
MSY	Mahila Samriddehi Yojana
NA	Nutrition Administration
NCD	Nutrition & Child Development
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Dev.
NT	Nutrition
P	Plan
P & AO	Pay & Accounts Officer
PU	Parliament Unit
PM	Project Manager
R	Research
SO	Section Officer
STEP	Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women
SW	Script Writer
TA	Technical Adviser
TR	Training
US	Under Secretary
V	Vigilance
WD	Women's Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WH	Working Women's Hostel
WNC	Wheat Based Nutrition & Creches
WW	Women's Welfare
WBP	World Bank Project


NATIONAL MACHINERY
WITH ITS
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT
NATIOAL MACHINERY (Dept. of WCD)
CSWB
NCW
NIPCCD
NGOs
NGOs
NGOs
NGOs
M/ Labour
NGOs
Plg. Comm
NGOs
M/ R.D.
NGOs
NGOs
M/ Agr. & Co-op.
D/EDN.
NGOs
M/ U.D.
NGOs
M/ Welfare
D/ S & T
M/ H & F W
NGOs
State S.W Advisory Borads
NGOs
State Commissions for Women
NGOs
Regional Offices of NIPCCD
NGOs
State Depts/DTES of WCD
NGOs

Institutional structures have undergone changes in response to these evolving concepts. These have changed from welfare to empowerment and beyond, in response to experiences of social reality at the field level as well as factors in the external environment. The State first saw women as a "handicapped" category, and as appropriate recipients of welfare doles. Today the State has accepted women's empowerment, women as active agents, participating in and guiding their own development. The publication of the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) has been a significant watershed in this connection. It emphasised mobilisation of women into autonomous units or groups where methods and processes received greater attention than structures.

10. There is a general appreciation that the innovations in theories have often outpaced innovations in management structures and mechanisms. This mismatch becomes clear when the process at the planning level and the implementation at the field level are analysed and it is observed that institutional and individual habits remain largely unaffected by the dynamics of policy refinement. One of the reasons also relates to the fact that the vast majority of policies, programmes and projects are directed at women within their engendered position and are intended primarily to meet their practical gender needs. An integrated approach, responding to their multiple socio-economic roles is often lacking. It needs to be appreciated that incorporation of women's concerns into development planning is a comrehensive concept requiring basic changes in how development is traditionally viewed.

11. The term 'National Machinery' came into common usage during the International Women's Decade and the three World Conferences on Women. The implementation of the Plan of Action (Mexico), the Programme of Action (Copenhagen) and Forward Looking Strategies (Nairobi) were primarily addressed to the National Governments. Broadly speaking, National Machinery was understood, in the UN and IWD context, to mean any body(ies) created or designated by Governments for advancing the cause of women. It covered operational agencies such as Ministries, Departments, Bureaux, etc., as well as advisory bodies, Committees and Commissions. The main objective of the National Machinery was seen as the integrated planning and implementation of comprehensive strategies and plans for women's advancement. The intent was clear. The locus of the Machinery was to be within the Government.

12. Considerable documentation of the post-Nairobi decade on the working of these Machineries showed that they did not succeed fully in the objective of "mainstreaming" or "integrating women in development". Women still continued to be largely peripheral to the macro-planning processes as well as to development planning. Mainstreaming required the rationalisation of resource allocation in all policies and programmes so as to benefit women equitably. The reasons for the lack of success of the National Machineries were many, ranging from their location in the under-resourced and invisible Ministries and Departments of Social Welfare, to their overload of functions and their lack of outreach to the bulk of poor but economically active women.

13. Public debate is taking place around the need to review the scope and definition of the National Machinery.

14. This was also the consensus of the SAARC Workshop which met in February 1994 in Delhi to discuss regional inputs into the World Conference. The National Machinery, it was resolved, should have a broader connotation so as to include all structures and mechanisms which support the cause of women, whether formally recognised and demarcated or not. (See Box)

15. A view has been expressed that it may perhaps be appropriate to replace the term for two

reasons, among others. One is that the word "National" has come to denote a tendency towards centralisation. The second is that the choice of the word "Machinery", besides being mechanistic, tends to give a static picture.

16. India has a strong federal system and the subject of women's development comes under the jurisdiction of both the Central and State Governments. With the recent 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments relating to decentralisation and the major responsibility for social sector development, being devolved to local governments, the need to use language and designations that convey the spirit of the laws adequately becomes more urgent.

17. The National Machinery as a set of structures and systems has seldom remained the same at any two given points of time. Some of the more evanescent structures have come and gone, while others of earlier vintage, have endured. Taking this dynamic view of the situation, an alternative formulation such as "Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women" could be adopted. Mechanisms evolve, change and respond to movements in the internal and external environment. The concept of women's advancement should be at the centre, supported by all the mechanisms working around, it in a concentric formation.

18. One of the features of the National Machinery has been the tendency to concentrate more on programmatic and "delivery" aspects rather than the broad mandate of women's development and empowerment. This means that the realisation of an alternative and more equal organisation of society than that which exists at present, in terms of both the structure and functions of relationships between men and women, remains a distant goal.

19. The major assumptions underlying the design of women specific programmes has been that they would supplement mainstreaming exercises in the transitional period and also simultaneously meet the immediate practical gender needs of women. In the circumstances, the tendency to look on women as target groups or as "beneficiaries" becomes near universal.

20. Very often, the personnel who operationalise the structures are unable to grasp the "essentials" or non-negotiable elements of their organisational mandates, because of lack of skills in gender analysis and lack of gender sensitivity. They, therefore, concentrate on what they see as concrete programmatic objectives. In this backdrop, the structures often do not facilitate the cause of the advancement of women.

21. Another important point to note is that while there is a National Perspective Plan and various Plans of Action, a comprehensive National Policy on Women's Development has not yet been adopted. The States of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, have, however, framed their own State-level policies. Such a National Policy would need to be integrated into the mechanisms and processes of national development planning. It would also need to firmly address the institutionalised subordination of women in all sectors and outline appropriate measures to respond to the situation. The Committee on the Status of Women in India had made a strong recommendation to the Government to frame such a policy so as to fulfill the Constitutional mandate of women's equality and Government's own long term objective of women's total involvement in national development.

22. Women by themselves are not a sector; women are a multisectoral constituency. A comprehensive and holistic policy on women can therefore negate some of the distortions and gaps that may creep into individual sectoral policies. Since such intersectoral linkages are as yet weak, the bodies under various authorities, though designed as part of the National Machinery, do not make for a complex or a consolidated structure.

23. To elaborate, the creation of special Cells within Ministries was intended to focus on generic

issues concerning women. But in many cases, it has led to isolation of issues and to their marginalisation. One unfortunate feature of their working has been termed by Dr. Sudhir Varma, a bureaucrat - researcher as the "pigeon hole" effect. This happens when papers from various Departments concerning women are docketed in the Cells which then become "the store-house of papers and not the nucleus of the machinery on policy and programmes".

24. Debates have also examined alternative models of the National Machinery and their efficacy.

25. The instrumentality of a high level National Committee on Women has been tried out by India on two occasions. These Committees have had no permanent presence and made little impact during their extremely limited life span. The mechanism was envisaged as a strategy to take speedy decisions on major policy matters relating to women without getting enmeshed in inter-ministerial red tape. For that reason, the membership of the Committee included high ranking persons such as women MPs (Members of Parliament), women Ministers from the Centre and the States, women MLAs (Members of Legislative Assemblies), office bearers of National and State level developmental Agencies etc., besides representatives of women's Organisations. In its actual working, however, the Committees tended to operate more like advisory bodies, where their recommendations had to be sent to the concerned Ministries for securing approvals. The main item of work performed by the Committees during their brief tenure was to approve the National Plan of Action (in 1978) and the draft National Perspective Plan of Action (in 1988). The important conclusion that emerged was that in order to play a catalytic role, a certain clout and clear leadership was essential. Besides, certain operational and procedural mechanisms were needed to be put in place, with appropriate and sufficient resource support, within the context of institutional space to all Agencies contributing to the prescribed goal of women's empowerment and development. Only this could ensure the full participation of women at all levels of society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of relevant policies and plans.

26. It is felt equally important that resource and data base centres be developed around women's issues and concerns to provide specific information and support on processes of empowerment. They should be accessible to all developmental Agencies, women's movement, non-Governmental Organisations, academia, media and civil society. Policy research should also be carried out and strong networking promoted with all partners in development to ensure a synergistic approach to a common goal. It is expected that the proposed National Resource Centre for Women will play this vital and dynamic role in future.

27. The Indian experience with the quest for women's equity and empowerment has thrown up a number of lessons, pointers and questions. In a frame of introspection, the National Machinery has now to attempt to assert its identity not as a discrete entity but as a cross-cutting and multisectoral presence, which will take the prominent features of the women's situation into consideration and take up advocacy with the State in tandem with groups outside the Government.

Based on contributions received from the Core Group headed by C P. Sujaya.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

In 1992 the National Commission for Women" was set up as a national apex statutory level body to review the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women; recommend remedial legislative measures; facilitate redressal of grievances and advise Government on all policy matters affecting women.

The composition of the Commission as laid down in the Act, provides for the appointment of a Chairperson committed to the cause of women, five Members who are nominated from amongst social scientists, experts in legislation, trade union movement, industrial management, administration, socio-economic development, and so on, and a Member Secretary.

To begin with, the Commission set up and organised its Secretariat and established institutional linkages with Government agencies, Members of Parliament, non-Governmental Organisations and others concerned with women's issues. The Commission took several initiatives to discharge its statutory function.

2. LAW AND LEGISLATION

2.1 One of the important functions of the Commission is to review laws and the legal safeguards provided for women therein. To facilitate this work, the Commission constituted Expert Committees consisting of retired Judges of the Supreme Court, eminent jurists and social scientists. The Commission identified the lacuane and shortcomings in legislations such as the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, the Child Marriage Restraint Act and the Hindu Marriage Act and suggested modifications therein. The suggestions included consequential amendments in the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act. The Commission recommended certain other amendments to the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure

- to combat the evil of sale of minor girls under the guise of marriage,
- to make the law relating to bigamy more stringent, to make the law relating to rape, particularly rape of minors, more effective,
- to provide that the offence of subjecting married women to cruelty by husband or by any relative of the husband be made compoundable,
- to improve the conditions of women in custody,

The Commission recommended enactment of new legislations, namely, a uniform marriage law to be applicable to all communities, a law to curb domestic violence against women and a law to provide for adoption of orphan and destitute children.

2.2 Recognizing the urgent need to generate public awareness and to initiate debate on certain issues of deep concern, the Commission organised seminars, conferences and workshops on selected themes such as sexual abuse of girl children, custodial justice for women, social security for women, infant feeding practices, justice delivery system, etc. The National Workshop on "Infant Feeding Practices and the Law", besides touching upon social mobilisation and the labour aspects of the problem, examined in detail the effectiveness of the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Food (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992 and the rules framed thereunder and highlighted the defects in the law and its implementation. The Conference on "Justice Delivery through Family Courts" primarily focussed its attention on the non-implementation of the Family Courts Act, the need for expanding their juridiction and also the need for formulation of model rules so as to make the Family Courts an effective institution throughout India.

2.3 "Mangalam Project", an experiment for delivery of justice to women at the grass-roots level launched by the Commission in villages in Pondicherry, has enabled women to settle disputes at the local level expeditiously and inexpensively. The Commission proposes to take up similar projects in other regions.

3. CUSTODIAL JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

3.1 Securing custodial justice for women is an important function of the Commission. The Commission visited jails in several States and took up with the concerned authorities, issues for remedial action. The Commission constituted an Expert Committee on Custodial Justice for Women, to examine the relevant laws and procedures and to recommend amendments to meet the existing shortcomings. The suggested amendments were considered by the Conference of Inspectors General of Prisons which the Commission organised. The Commission's recommendations to the Government included amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, ban arrest of women between sunset and sunrise, search of women by a woman duly authorised by law and prohibition of the use of handcuffs or corporal punishment on female prisoners. The Commission further added that there should be police stations and lock-ups exclusively for women, under the control of women police. Separate jails for women in each State and separate custodial facilities for convicts and undertrail women should be provided. Legal aid should be available to every prisoner and socio-legal counselling cells should be set up in every prison. The Commission stressed the need to set up "released prisoners" aid society and arrangements for care of children accompanying women in custody. Due to the intervention of the Commission, several convicts who had spent more than 10 years in jail were released, having regard to their good conduct and age. The Commission organised training programmes for Superintendents of Jails, Remand Homes and other custodial institutions, to reorient their attitudes towards women prisoners.

4. SEXUAL ABUSE OF GIRL CHILDREN

4.1 As a part of its special study of the rising menace of sexual abuse of girl children, the Commission organised a seminar in which eminent legal experts, jurists, medico-legal experts, social workers, experts on mental health, police officers and women activists participated. The seminar examined comprehensively various aspects of the problem namely,

- the substantive law relating to child abuse,
- procedural issues and required changes,
- medico-legal aspects,
- mental health and rehabilitation of the child victim,

Recognising the need to make available a comprehensive manual on medico-legal aspects of rape and sexual abuse, for the use of non-Governmental Organisations, medical and police personnel and the public, the Commission prepared and published a Compendium on the subject. Amendments to procedural law as well as substantive law were proposed to Government including a recommendation to raise the quantum of punishment for sexual abuse of girl children. The Commission intensified its efforts to mobilise public opinion and action against sexual abuse of children by setting up sub-committes of social workers to monitor cases in the States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Delhi. Cases of molestation/rape of children were identified and assistance rendered to secure justice and help the child victims.

5. REDRESSAL IN CASES OF ATROCITIES AND DEPRIVATION OF RIGHTS OF WOMEN

5.1 The Commission is empowered to investigate cases of atrocities against women and deprivation of women's rights. Recognising the priority to be accorded to the elimination of violence against women, the Commission exercises the powers of a Civil Court trying a suit while investigating such cases, particularly in respect of ,

- summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examination on oath,
- requiring the production of any document,
- receiving evidence on affidavits,
- requisitioning any public record,
- issuing Commissions for the examination of witmesses and documents.

5.2 During 1992-95 the Commission examined more than 800 complaints from all over the country and took up issues arising therefrom. The complaints included cases of harassment for dowry, domestic violence, molestation, sexual harassment, rape, stripping, torture by police, lodging non-criminal lunatic women in jail, desertion and bigamy.

5.3 The Commission's intervention proved effective in securing justice to the aggrieved women. In one instance, after receiving the Commission's enquiry report the Prime Minister sanctioned compensation to a village level woman functionary who was sexually assaulted by men who opposed her strong advocacy to prevent child marriages.

5.4 The Commission organised a Public Enquiry on Crimes Against Women. Besides facilitating redressal of grievances, the Public Enquiry generated tremendous awareness of the issues involved, because of the overwhelming response received from the mass media.

6. PROMOTIONAL WORK FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

6.1 The Commission took several initiatives to promote women's socio-economic advancement, empowerment and political participation.

6.2 Impact of SAP on Women : In the wake of the adoption of new macro-economic policy and Structural Adjustment Programme, the Commission felt concerned about the apprehension that the reforms would affect women adversely. A national workshop on "Women's Employment, Equality and Impact of Economic Reforms on Women" was organised. Several recommendations regarding strategies, interventions and action plans to improve women's employment in the context of the economic reforms, emerged from the workshop.

6.3 Women and the Public Distribution System : The needy women and their families are, to a large extent, dependent on the Public Distribution System for food at affordable prices. Micro studies in 3 States revealed that the delivery system was riddled with many maladies. The Commission addressed appeals to States to allot fair price shops to women's cooperatives or to needy women on a priority basis and several Chief Ministers responded favourably. In many States, Fair Price Shops are now being alloted to women.

5.4 Political participation and empowerment : During 1993, the Indian Constitution was amended to provide for reservation of one-third seats for women in the elected village level and civic bodies, empowering women to participate in the political process at the grass-roots level. The Commission set up an Expert Group to evolve strategies to facilitate women's political empowerment. Pursuant to the recommendations of this group, the Commission recommended to the Tenth Finance Commission that ;

- "development of women in the State" should be included as one of the criteria for determining the devolution of funds from the Centre to States,
- the State Governments should ensure that even at the village level, a suitable percentage of resources be reserved for programmes which help women, such as water supply, health services, nutrition, sanitation, etc.

6.4.1 The workshop on "Women and Panchayati Raj" considered training needs of elected women in rural areas, measures to be adopted by Government agencies and role of voluntary organisations in the new environment. The Commission sponsored studies relating to the issue of mobilising rural women for political participation.

6.5 Gender Perspective for the Electronic Media : After surveying the dismal scenario of glaring gender bias in the electronic media and recognising the immense potential of the media to effectively promote gender equality, a workshop on "Gender Perspective for the Electronic Media" was organised. Government was advised to ;

- revise the guidelines for the media to eliminate gender-stereotyping and negative portrayals of women.
- modify its policy to serve the cause of women's advancement.

6.6 Incorporating Gender Perspectives in Culture Policy : The Commission recommended a review of Government's Culture Policy to provide creative women an equal chance to be seen, and heard. Besides giving recognition to creative women, positive action should be taken to identify, motivate and encourage talented girls and women to enhance their contribution to culture. Greater representation of women in award panels, among grant recipients and in decision making posts in institutions of art and culture have been called for.

6.7 Women and Public Services : The Commission reviewed the functioning of Women's Cells in Government Organisations and issued guidelines to re-activate them. Reserve of 30% of the posts at all levels, in the services under the Government, public sector undertakings, Universities and other autonomous bodies for women has also been recommended to the Government.

7. NETWORKING WITH STATE LEVEL COMMISSIONS FOR WOMEN

7.1 The National Commission has been exhorting the State Governments to constitute Women's Commissions at the State level, to facilitate the surveillance and redressal functions at the local level. The States of West Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra, Assam, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Punjab have set up State Commissions for Women. Other States are in the process of setting up Women's Commissions. The National Commission has taken up measures to ensure coordination, pooling of resources and networking between the National and State level Women's Commissions.

7.2 Setting up of the National Commission for Women has kindled great hopes and aroused enormous expectations among the women of the country.

Based on contributions received from the Member Secretary, National Commission for Women.

SAARC WORKSHOP ON THE GIRL CHILD AND COOPERATION FOR THE 4TH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

FEBRUARY 1994, NEW DELHI.
RESOLUTION
(EXCERPTS)

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming of gender perspectives should be reorganised as a critical process requiring changes in attitudes and behaviour. These changes are required at the levels of the individual, family, community, policy and decision makers and Government. For this, innovative communication methodologies, appropriate gender training and networking between Governmental and non-Governmental systems are important pre-requisites. Since effective mainstreaming is an important statment of commitment to women's empowerment and requires consideration and action at the levels mentioned above, higher echelons of decision making systems should display strong commitment and political will to recognise and give priority to mainstreaming in all developmental sectors.

National Machineries for Women's Development

Taking into account the reality of National Machineries being marginalised and having low visibility and influence within decision making systems thereby being unable to play their mandated role, it was felt necessary to (a) finalise and adopt a National Policy on Women; (b) devise institutional mechanisms to facilitate continuous interaction within Government on the one hand and between Government and non-Governmental organisations including the women's movement on the other; and (c) ensure adequate resource support with backing by the Government both in terms of trained and sensitized personnel as well as budgetary allocation.

Empowerment

Changes in prevailing administrative cultures or norms so as to enable them to respond adequately to the special needs of such strategies and programmes should be a priority.

Based on the Annual Report of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 1994-95

WOMEN IN EXTREME POVERTY

Poverty eradication, with the full involvement of the poor in development, is the best engine of growth. However, it is important to recognise that discourses on planning have not effectively mainstreamed gender issues into the complexity called "development structures", even though they are doubly disadvantaged as poor and as women.

1.1 Analysis of the structure and causes of poverty is in simple terms the study of who gets what and why. It is the study of access and constraints to access. The flow of productive resources, the creation of capabilities, the consumption of goods, the use of services, all the intertwined determinants and results of socio-economic differentiation among individuals, within the family, groups within the community and regions within the country, can be mapped in terms of access.

1.2 Women constitute a major workforce in India. The absolute majority work in the informal sector, using simple technologies and limited resources. Continuous gender related inequities in terms of unequal access to land, productive resources, information, skills and education, in addition to the recurrent inequity in the labour market and harassment at work have put millions of women in a disadvantaged position and made them vulnerable to changes in the economy.

1.3 With shifting manufacturing patterns, there has been an increase in the female workforce.Women's flexibility and cheap labour are manifested both in the formal and informal sectors, in the pattern of feminisation of wage labour, exploitative conditions, widening gender disparities, insecurity of women in labour markets, increasing female poverty and migration.

1.4 As the direct result of their predominance in the informal sector, women's contribution to production and growth is not adequately accounted for in national statistics. Misconceptions and prejudices about women's input to economic development are frequent and much of their work goes unnoticed by policy makers and planners. Valuation of home work apart, women carry out numerous home sustaining activities which would fetch a price in an urban industrial system but are not marketable in an agro-economic system.

1.5 To counter this invisibility of women workers, the 1991 Census altered the key question from, "did you work any time at all last year?" to include the clause "including unpaid work on farm or family enterprise". This did result in a better reflection of work participation rates of women.

2. Poverty in general, and extreme poverty in particular, has a significant gender dimension. Policies and programmes need to be redesigned to have a better understanding of the characteristics of women in poverty, and the processes that lead to intensification of poverty. The impact any decision, economic, social or political, will have on empowering women has to be the crucible test for determining a choice of programme policy or action.

2.1 Women are more sensitive than men to the extremes of poverty and its consequences. For poor households, the woman's capacity to work, her health, her knowledge, and her skill endowments are often the only resources to call upon for survival. The labour force participation of women and their proportional contribution to total family income are the highest in households with the lowest economic status. In other words, the poorest families are the most dependent upon women's economic productivity.

2.2 Women are critical to the processes of moving their families out of poverty. Around thirty to thirty five per cent of rural households are estimated to be headed by women and thus dependent almost exclusively on their income. Even where there is a male earner, women's earnings form a major part of the income of poor households. Though women often have little control over their earnings, studies show that when they have some discretion, they spend the money on family needs. Increases in women's income thus translate more directly into tangible benefits.

3. Available data, particularly from micro studies suggests that the percentage of women among the extremely poor is disproportionately large. Some women in extreme poverty are visible as specially vulnerable groups, but probably the larger number are not in a separate, visible category and are to be found in the average male headed and very poor families. Women are acutely vulnerable, being very poor and also having to face discrimination in intra-household distribution of resources.

4. Poverty has many dimensions to it. Low earnings, and low level of skill, lack of assets and access to training or education are accompanied by poor health, malnutrition, absence of shelter and food insecurity. Lack of economic security often means high rate of migration, or vulnerability to displacement. Family size is significantly larger amongst the very poor. Domestic violence adds to poor women's plight. They require special attention since extreme poverty by definition implies low absorptive capacity for development programmes. A minimum base of social-security is a necessary condition for the poor to gain access to economic security.

5. Official policies of development and poverty eradication in India have gradually shifted away from a reliance on purely welfare or income generating programmes, to an understanding that the State needs either to provide directly or to create an appropriate environment, such that the poor can exercise their entitlements to health, education and other basic needs. There is also an increased awareness that the poor are not a homogeneous group, that intra-household inequalities can be significant, and that special attention has to be paid to poor women.

5.1 Poverty estimates generated by the Government form the basis for identification and planning of anti-poverty programmes. The "poverty line", distinguishing the "poor" from the "non-poor", is defined using a calorific norm with a fixed consumption basket.

5.2 There are, several methodological and data problems in measuring poverty. Be that as it may, various estimates put this category at sizeable section of India's population. While a breakdown for States, as well as for rural and urban areas is available there is no disaggregation by gender.

5.3 Some indication of the incidence of poverty by gender has been, however, obtained through studies and research efforts of experts. The following striking points emerge as a consensus from them:

- The percentage of adult women below the poverty line exceeds the percentage of adult men below the poverty line, both in rural and urban areas;
- The percentage of children in the 0-4 age group in poor households exceeds that in non-poor households, with corresponding implications for the mobility of women and for child care services;
- In both urban and rural areas, disadvantaged groups of women from Scheduled Castes and Tribes constitute a high proportion of the poor.

5.4 There is no universally accepted statistical definition of "extreme poverty", but one estimate suggests that extreme poverty be taken roughly at the level of three-fourths of the poverty line for the rural and urban population.

6. Government acknowledges that the benefits of developmental planning have not percolated to all sections equally and therefore disadvantaged groups need to receive special assistance and investment. Under the 8th Plan, Rs. 30,000 crores has been allocated for poverty eradication. With this support, broad-based programmes are operating at the State level.

6.1 Quotas of 30-40% for women have been introduced in the last few years, in these programmes, to ensure gender equitable coverage. Under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)- designed to raise the income of small and marginal farmers, agricultural labour and rural artisans, by providing assets and other inputs the coverage of women has been consistently increasing from nearly 10% of the total in 1985-86 to almost 34% in 1993-94. The per unit investment under the programme is put as Rs. 10,000/-.

6.2 Training of Rural Youth in Self-Employment (TRYSEM) is provided to improve the technical and entrepreneurial skills of poor families for taking up income generating activities. The coverage of women in this programme is pegged at 40%. Over 14,22,000 women have benefitted from it so far.

6.3 The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) provides additional employment for the unemployed and under-employed by creating community and social assets for the direct and continuing benefit of the rural poor. Of the total employment generated during the last five years, the share of women has been 1035.93 million mandays which was 24.19% of the total employment generation. The percentage has been showing an upward trend.

6.4 Under the programme of the Indira Awas Yojana, dwelling units are constructed for the poorest, including women-headed poor households. The houses are allotted to the female members of the household or in the joint names of husband and wife to enable women to own assets. States have been advised to issue similar joint ownership certificates or "pattas" where ceiling surplus land is distributed to landless poor families.

6.5 A programme in operation since 1982-83 exclusively for women and children is the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) which has now been extended to all districts of the country. Around 18,000 women's groups have been formed to take up economic activities. This programme aims not only to raise the incomes of rural women of poor households, but also enables the organised participation of groups of women in programmes of credit, skill training and infrastructural support for self-employment. Their access to basic services of health, education, child-care, nutrition, drinking water and sanitation is also sought to be improved.

6.6 With the expanding role of self-employment as the alternative to wage employment and a larger number of women entering the labour force, other complementary initiatives have also been introduced.

6.7 Women's Development Corporations have been set up in the States since 1986-87, to play a catalytic role in identifying women entrepreneurs, providing technical consultancy, facilitating availability of credit, promoting marketing of goods, strengthening women's cooperatives and arranging training facilities.

6.8 Institutions such as nationalised Banks and the National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) have a package of schemes for poverty eradication which relate to Priority Sector Lending (PSL). Within these, special emphasis is laid on gender related aspects of credit and support services. NABARD is promoting the concept of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to reach out to small credit needs of the rural sector. Currently, over 2000 such SHGs are in operation in the country. Significantly 90% of the SHGs are run by women.

7. Several evaluations of Government sponsored poverty eradication programmes have been conducted, and it has been concluded that while a dent has been made, there still remains much ground to be covered. It has also been observed that those near the poverty line are able to cross the threshold through such programmes, but others at the bottom, specially women, have neither the economic nor the social wherewithal to utilise these facilities to improve their economic status. Programmes often focus on beneficiaries primarily as economic, not social categories and do not regard them as partici-

pants in the development process.

7.1 Women without asset ownership or sustained male support are particularly vulnerable and this includes groups such as elderly and widowed women, female heads of households, women with disabilities, migrant women, "dalit" women, displaced or refugee women and urban poor women. It is necessary to analyse in depth, specific problems of all these specially deprived groups in order to address their needs (See Box).

7.2 To give an example, it is estimated that there are around 30 million widows in India (8.2% of the female population in 1981) as compared to 3.7% widowers in the male population. In the absence of appreciation of such complexities, tangible overall advancement in the status of women is not achieved.

7.3 Without addressing the problems of illiteracy, poor health and malnutrition and the importance of supportive day care, primary school education, merely targetting women to participate in income generation programmes is likely to be unsuccessful. In fact, better physical environment and social support systems need to be integrated conceptually with economic policies and programmes for them to be truly impactful.

8. While Government policies and programmes have been uniform across the country, differences in implementation, due both to attitudes and differences in institutional structures, have been evident. The experience with growth has also been varied. As a result, there is a tendency for poverty to be concentrated in Central and Eastern India where almost 75% of the rural poor are found. Similarly, poverty is location specific within States, too. In Gujarat, there is a high growth industrial corridor, with a poor and environmentally degraded hinterland. It is only the States of Punjab and Haryana which have sustained high growth rates. Elsewhere, bottlenecks in infrastructure, and resource use, have set limits to sustainable growth rates.

8.1 Without keeping in view regional dimensions, it is unlikely that any macro economic policy framework will meet with equal success everywhere and even more unlikely that growth will be vigorous enough to eradicate poverty.

9. Over and above regional variations, intra-household dimensions of inequality and disparity acquire special significance, once the focus is on poor women. Entitlements to households resources are never even and there is a consistent gender bias in all matters including the basic access to food. This deprivation cannot be adequately captured in statistical estimates.

9.1 It is usually felt that intra household inequality can be tackled only through empowering women and is not an area where the State can do much. But the State and the policy environment certainly affect the ultimate determinants of women's empowerment. Further, the labour market can also have a tremendous impact on issues of power by strengthening the economic status of women and thus indirectly providing them a voice in intra household matters.

10. Regional dimensions, and intra household resource allocation issues, underline the inadequacy of the general approach that focusses only on the macro policy framework. Micro impacts and regional perspectives needs to be well integrated with macro policy directions. This requires, first, institutional structures that permit a ready flow of information in both directions, and a system of governance that leaves enough space for both local and private action. Second, processes that empower the poor, to enable their perspectives and needs to influence policy directions, require strengthening.

11. Among 'economic' measures to eradicate poverty, there is thus a case that the range of Government programmes be strengthened and existing processes be made more flexible. Lessons from successful programmes, that have well designed delivery systems and have considered the multiple needs and vulnerabilities of the very poor such as

SEWA, Working Women's Forum and Mahila Milan (See Box), could be interwoven into existing Governmental systems. More financial resources could also perhaps be given to reputed non-Governmental Organisations, with monitoring control by the Government, especially in areas where their action has been demonstrably effective. In other words, a closer partnership could be attempted, within the backdrop of promoting peoples' participation.

12 Panchayats and Municipalities or local self Government bodies which are to be in position in all the States by the end of 1995 as a result of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts also need to be involved actively in poverty-eradication efforts.

13 The 'social' dimensions of extreme poverty eradication require action on a range of fronts, designed to empower people, especially women, primarily through awareness of rights. This includes literacy in general, legal literacy in particular, and training programmes that will assist women in productive activity. It is important that such skill training be well matched with market requirements. Finally, while local action should be encouraged, there should be in-built mechanisms to ensure that mis-match does not occur between decisions taken locally, and larger macro-level market trends.

14. Therefore, efforts to improve the position of poor Indian women need to focus on them as economic actors within a framework of their other multiple roles, as well as the total socio-political environment. Increasing women's economic productivity affects their own status and survival in the immediate family and their valuation at the wider societal level. Evidence suggests that improvements in their 'bargaining power' within the household, and direct, unmediated access to income drastically reduces women's dependency and their situation of deprivation.

14.1 Changed perceptions of women's economic value are bound to change family resource allocation preferences by raising the opportunity costs of not investing in the welfare and economic productivity of women. This means that raising female earning power will become critical to increasing the effective demand for the education, health and family planning services necessary to improve women's status. The strategy may successfully, result in the following spin-offs:

- improved child survival;
- increased share of family income allocated to food and health care for children;
- enhanced household incomes;
- increased aggregate labour productivity;
- induced growth in other economic sectors.
- and reduced population growth patterns.

15. The cumulative impact will be the overall advancement of the economic status of women along with the defeminisation and eradication of poverty.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Dr. Devaki Jain.

Situation of Urban Poor Women - Governmental Response

Urban poor women are at a disadvantage, both in comparison with rural women and urban men. Female work participation rates in urban areas are low. The situation is worsening with more women being pushed into the sphere of casual labour. Their share in regular jobs is not only small but also dwindling. It is evident from the National Institute of Urban Affairs, Registration Sample Survey (NIUA RSS) No. 43 that the formal sector, employing only 1-2% of the total female workforce, appears closed to them for atleast three reasons: a) education criteria established for entry, which females of low income groups do not meet; b) competition from males and; c) lack of flexibility in hours and places of work.

Women's earnings as a share of family incomes are extremely significant. Without these a number of households would plunge deeper into poverty. In this sense women are central to the survival strategy of urban poor households.

Though female literacy and education levels in urban areas are higher than in rural areas, in urban slums the rate of literacy is low. Although death rates are on average low in Indian cities, the urban poor face mortality risks comparable to those in less developed rural areas. The disaggregated data suggests a higher incidence of communicable diseases among the urban poor. It is women and children who are exposed to the maximum risks, living in slums where the physical conditions are adverse and basic amenities lacking. The burden of health and family care in these conditions has increased.

To understand better the empirical aspect of the status of women and children, the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment conducted a benchmark survey covering 1,50,814 households of urban slums spread across States, cities and towns. It emerged, expectedly, that urban slum women's access to immunisation, nutrition, maternal health, education, housing, sanitation and water supply was extremely unsatisfactory.

To combat the problems of the urban poor Government is implementing the Urban Basic Services Programme (UBSP), the Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY) and other programmes. All these give special emphasis to women beneficiaries. Under NRY at least 30% beneficiaries are expected to be women.

UBSP is a unique programme aimed at empowering urban poor women and actively involving them in the planning and implementation of community development activities. It reaches an estimated 5.5 million of the urban poor. Universal coverage in the cities is an overall objective through Government, municipalities, non-Governmental Organisations and other community-based partnerships.

Under this programme, over 33,000 women called Resident Community Volunteers (RCV) volunteer time in their own neighbourhoods towards overall community improvement. Small neighbourhood groups are then formed. Many of these volunteers are very poor; many are illiterate or semi literate. Agreeing to serve as an RCV is one of the first experiences of community activism for the women.

Over 3400 Neighbourhood Associations covering around 2000 poor households have been formed with RCV and other interested women serving in leadership positions. They prepare community mini plans based on needs, priorities and resources available. They also serve as information channels, advocacy groups and implementing bodies. Registration of these Associations as NGOs is encouraged and in many urban poor communities these are the first "women's associations". Around 290 Community Development Societies (CDSs) have been formed. In one State, a federation of CDSs has also been set up.

UBSP has provided support to a wide range of unmet community needs by establishing over 2,000 creches serving over 60,000 young children, constructing over 200 community centres, many through joint community action, motivating the Education Departments to build over 100 new primary schools in project areas and helping improve maternal and child health services.

Thrift and Credit Societies, started initially in a few cities covering around 15,000 women are rapidly expanding. This has helped women to afford loans for home improvement as well as to increase family income. Improved water supply, improved drainage, toilet construction, home and community plantations, community cooperatives are among the other activities supported. Many of these projects are now managed and maintained by the community. A new area of concern is child labour and several groups are supporting State and national efforts towards its eradication.

Since 1994, the UBSP has focussed on ensuring that Government Departments and programmes target better in order to reach the urban poor. Analyses of plans from many cities indicate a new "convergent" investment in the UBSP areas, demonstrating the catalytic and facilitating character of the programme.

UBSP is one of the few Government supported programmes in the urban sector which promotes a community voice in decision making, especially that of women, and provides a recognised structure for it.

Contributed by the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment, Government of India.

Women's Co-operatives — The SEWA Experience

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)) is a trade union formed and registered in 1972 in an effort to reach out to poor, illiterate, self-employed women who are economically active. SEWA develops their economic potential through formation of co-operatives. The 30,000 women members of SEWA, including vendors and traders, home based skilled and semi-skilled workers and service providers in rural and urban sectors have formed their own co-operatives. SEWA now has 67 urban and rural co-operatives.

SEWA's first co-operative, a credit society formed through the collective effort of 4,000 women, who contributed Rs.10 per share in 1974, has bloomed into a full fledged Co-operative Bank with 43,000 members having a share capital of Rs. 28,12,000 and working capital of Rs. 8,47,00,000 in 1994.

Mahila SEWA Bank, the first women's bank of its kind in the country, works with and for poor, illiterate, self-employed women. Women operate their own savings accounts, obtain loans for domestic, social or vocational uses, buy tools, equipment and raw materials through credit facilities and borrow capital to initiate or enhance their trade. They hold shares, elect and get elected as members of the Board of Directors to run their own Bank.

The SEWA Bank is a model in banking for the poor, saving women at the grassroots from exploitation by money-lenders charging unbelievable rates of interest, traders selling them raw material at cruelly profiteering rates and even male members of their own families grabbing their hard earned money.

Today the SEWA cooperatives fall into five broad categories:

- Craft and Artisans' Co-operatives
- Livestock Keepers' Co-operatives
- Small Traders and Vendors' Co-operatives
- Service Renderers' Co-operatives
- Land-based Co-operatives

Due to lack of skills, at the initial stage the cooperative is neither strong nor economically viable. A state of preparation and transition has to be created through awareness and training in skills, organisation and entrepreneurship. The development of the cooperative goes through three distinct phases.

- Training the women in vocational skills or upgrading existing skills,
- Organising production units to earn income from the acquired or existing skills, and
- Formation and registration of the production units.

Experience has shown that the entire process, from skill-upgrading to registration to economically viable units of self-reliant co-operatives, is attained over a period of a decade. It has to be an exercise in patience and faith.

Marketing of finished products is the major bottle-neck for the self-employed producer co-operatives. Since the co-operatives lack business skills, the infrastructure of a supporting programme of management and marketing has been developed as a methodology to inculcate self-reliance among co-operatives.

Subsequent to the setting up of rural marketing centres exhibition-cum-sales have been organised since 1980. The participation in exhibitions and organising exhibitions for the marketing of the goods is not only an alternative marketing channel but it also helps in the following areas :

- to secure orders locally and from outside;
- to link buyers directly to producers;
- to expose them to different markets and different kind of customers;
- to infuse ideas for product development and to provide regular employment;
- to generate income for product development and to provide regular employment;
- to know market trends or needs;
- to help stabilise the price of their products at levels where it is economically feasible.

Attempts are made to ensure regular markets for the co-operatives by linking them to institutional buyers. After seven years of persistent negotiations with the Government authorities, SEWA alongwith other women's organisations, has been able to initiate a policy of the Government to buy goods and services from women's co-operatives. There is a Government Resolution which enlists women's co-operatives to supply goods and services, to Government offices, and Institutions.

Design is an important component of marketing. It is imperative to keep in touch with the modern market and design goods to suit the preferences of the customers. Design workshops are held regularly in collaboration with professionals and designers. The managers and the artisans of the co-operatives have been trained together in these workshops.

Co-operative members often lack certain business skills and therefore are unable to price their goods and services. They do not take into consideration their own time and labour inputs. SEWA helps them to price their products and services.

The pricing policy ensures that artisans earn well from their production. For the service co-operatives, a methodology has been evolved whereby labour is quantified in terms of earnings which must be comparable to the wages of organised sector workers in the same trade.

Contributed by Ms. Lalita Krishnaswami, Vice-President, SEWA.

MACRO ECONOMIC POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON WOMEN

India has embarked upon a course of restructuring its development policy framework since 1991. The roots of the new paradigm of growth can be traced to the eighties, but the balance of payments crisis of 1991 was the decisive turning point, pushing the economy into a trajectory different from the import substitution path that had so far been followed. The new macro economic policies consist of both stabilisation measures as well as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), under the umbrella of liberalisation and greater reliance on market mechanisms.

2. An assessment of the impact is made difficult by the fact that many of the policies, especially with respect to the SAP, are still unfolding and there is invariably a time lag in availability of data for analysis. At present, there is very little disaggregated data, gender wise, available from the national statistical Agencies.

3. The complexity of assessment is further compounded, given the multiplicity of women's roles in any society. A woman is an economic producer, home manager, child bearer, caretaker of children and the elderly. Women work longer hours, with fewer resources, for lower rewards. They face greater constraints and harsher choices in times of change.

3.1 There is an assumption that women's time and unpaid labour is infinitely elastic and that any additional requirement may be filled by women increasing their workload. This assumption arises essentially out of the disregard for the unpaid work which women do. The dominance of the market leads to undervaluing things not directly calculable in its terms, household work being a prime example.

4. It is important to examine how women respond to the changes and whether they are able to utilise the opportunities offered by the new economic climate and cope with the negative fallout, if any.

4.1 As early as 1974, the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women highlighted that the country's economic policies had tended to marginalise women. The majority of Indian women were and continue to be in the informal sector. Data indicates that women have not made very major gains in terms of employment. A small stratum has been able to enter the organised sector. Estimates suggest that around two thirds of female casual labourers in rural areas continue to be below the poverty line.

4.2 One positive development, however, has been a gradual decline in under-employment even within the unorganised and informal sector. The critical role of public expenditure, primarily in rural areas through poverty eradication programmes, has been widely acknowledged. The State's commitment to providing social services has also played a vital role in improving the quality of life indicators.

5. Stabilisation refers to short term attempts to steady the economy in the face of sudden shocks of existing macro-economic imbalances, especially, in balance of payments. They are basically contractionary in nature. Restrictive fiscal and monetary policies aim to squeeze overall demand within the system so as to reduce imbalances in the external balance of payments and overall budgetary deficit.

5.1 Measures that are to be implemented are cuts in the Government expenditure and there is an anticipation of the market playing a more significant role in resource allocation, on the premise that one reason for poor economic performance is distortion in resource allocation.

5.2 It has been projected by some researchers that the economic policies may lead to increase in unemployment, with women bearing a disproportionate share of the brunt. The anticipated reduction in services implies that women may also have to allocate more time to activities that were previously at least partially provided by the State. The burden of work may be intensified by inflation which it is feared may squeeze real incomes and push women to seek alternate ways of their supplementation.

5.3 As yet, however, data from the field is not available on these aspects. In order to be effective, it is important that analyses of the data should be sectoral, detailed, policy-related and highlight threats as well as opportunities vis-a-vis poor women.

6. Unlike the stabilisation programme which is of short duration, the Structural Adjustment Programme is a longer run process aimed at a fundamental restructuring of the economy. The package consists of policies to increase the outward orientation of the economy, reduce the role of the public sector, and liberalise various sectors to make them more responsive to the markets.

7. It is clear that there are many kinds of responses within the current development discourse to the new macro economic policies adopted by the Government. These are mostly derived from experiences in other countries. They are primarily interested in the deprived sections of society - poor women, their livelihoods, basic needs, rights, equity and justice. These responses are, simplistically put, either pro or anti change.

7.1 The supporters of the new macro economic policies have expressed the view that liberalisation, as expressed through deregulation, was sorely needed. They believe that these policies present a unique opportunity to restructure the economy and redefine the role of the State in ensuring poverty eradication and social justice.

7.2 Those opposed to the policies fear that they may lead to jobless growth, curtailment of support systems and adverse impact of the negative fallout of globalisation. The gender concerns that are being voiced are basically two-fold. Firstly, whether in the period of stabilisation when costs have to be borne, poor women would benefit from social safety nets put in position by the Government, or not. Secondly, whether the benefits when they begin to materalise, would necessarily trickle down to poor women. Several studies have been taken up in these areas.

7.3 How the Structural Adjustment Programme would affect the income earning opportunities available to women has also been the subject of widespread concern. Various related issues have been highlighted. There may be, for example, expansion of employment opportunities for women in export oriented industries, expansion of private sector in the core sector, expansion of the service industry, cash crops cultivation and agri-business. Yet, the uncertainities imposed by inequalising market structures and the fact that women may increase their labour contribution with little effective control over cash income, may be detrimental to their long term interests.

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7.4 Another possible area of increasing employment opportunities may be finance, banks and insurance sectors. These improvements in employment may however, be offset by relative decline in the traditional sectors — which employ women in large numbers — as they diminish in importance. In addition, there may be a reduction in public sector employment, given the constraints of expenditure.

7.5 The ripple effect of change is likely to be experienced in the informal sector, too. As self-employed women primarily deal in non-tradeable goods in the informal sector, the emphasis on tradeables may limit their opportunities. The combined effect may, therefore, depress their earnings.

7.6 Overall, the economic pressures may compel households to resort to various difficult survival strategies. The feminisation of 'work' that may be a consequence of the policies may, therefore, throw up both challenges and opportunities. It must, however, be emphasised that empirical studies and detailed figures need to be analysed further before arriving at any pre-conceived or definitive conclusions about the direction and impact of policy changes.

8. India is also currently going through a period of trade liberalisation. This is likely to have a profound impact on the lives of its people who have for decades been operating under extensive levels of protectionism, with limited access to international markets. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has been established to regulate and monitor the world trading system. Decisions at the Uruguay Round of GATT talks, resulted in agreements to reduce tarrifs, standardise rules and integrate previously non-GATT sectors — textiles, agriculture and services — into the world-wide trading system. This is likely to have a deep influence on India's structure of exports.

8.1 While there is a consensus that trade is important for national development and growth, it needs to be recognised that the debate is of particular importance to women.

8.2 Women constitute the majority of the workforce in modern export industries and Multi National Corporations (MNCs) based in Free Trade and Export Processing Zones (FTZs/EPZs). Most economically active women operate in the informal sector, producing goods that are extremely sensitive to external competition. Women dominate in sectors such as agriculture, textiles and clothing which may henceforth be closely integrated with the global trading system.

8.3 Technological transformation of production processes, needed to meet international standards, may represent a threat to women with low levels of education and technological skills. Any changes that trade expansion brings to the natural environment or to the State's ability to service its citizens are also likely to have a direct impact on women. So far, not much attention has been paid to the gender differentiated impact of expanded trade. The gender dimension has been overlooked in trade policy making processes.

8.4 While analysing these trends, it is important to take into account their multiple facets. On the one hand, trade expansion may cause displacement, unemployment and hardship in some sectors. Those sectors likely to suffer most from international competition may therefore to be targetted for financial and technical assistance. On the other hand, many new income and employment opportunities will emerge. Here, efforts may be made to identify potential growth areas and women should be provided the necessary skills and contacts to take advantage of these openings.

8.5 For women's needs and concerns to be voiced, it is of fundamental importance that women are better represented in trade policy making bodies at all levels. It is necessary to produce gender disaggregated data for all sectors, to enable a better assessment of gender specific impact of global changes. Advocacy and campaign activities also need to be developed for policy changes along these lines.

9. The Government is conscious of the efforts that are required to mitigate the possible negative impact of these policies, specially for vulnerable sections, including women. India is laying emphasis on a high rate of growth of the economy, combined with an employment oriented composition of growth, supplemented by special employment programmes. Substantial inputs are being provided in agriculture and infrastructure and it is expected to realise the target of full employment by 2002.

9.1 For effective management of the new macro economic policies, steps such as control of inflation, careful choice of areas of budget cuts, training, retraining and redeployment of the working people, labour protection and efficiency of social security systems have already been taken up. The tone has been set to concentrate greater Governmental efforts in the social sector and poverty eradication.

9.2 The National Renewal Fund and the Social Safety Net are already in place. Under the Social Safety Net, allocations have been increased for programmes relating to the development of women and children, such as the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, National Creche Fund and the National Credit Fund for Women.

9.3 The National Renewal Fund provides funds for compensation to employees affected by restructuring or closure of industrial units, assistance to cover the costs of retraining and redeployment of employees arising as a result of modernisation, technological upgradation and industrial restructuring. It supports employment generation schemes. A total of Rs.2549.66 crores has been budgetted for it.

10. What is now required is to give macro-economic and development policies a distinct gender perspective, with the overarching objective that poor women do not become worse off in absolute terms and that better off women are not worse off than men, in comparable social groups. The indicators of well-being should include not only income, but total hours of work, health and nutritional status etc. It needs to be appreciated that the relationship between women, the market and the State is a complex one in which conscious efforts are required to achieve gender equity.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Annie Prasad.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY - FOCUS ON AGRICULTURE

The largest sector of India's economy, agriculture contributes a little over 30% of the GNP and accounts for 60% of the employment. Although the percentage of rural population has dropped from 82.7% in 1951 to 74.3% in 1991, the average farm size has also fallen from 2.1 to 1.8 hectares during this period due to the steady increase in population.

1.1 There has been an increase in the number of landless families and families with small or marginal holdings. Much planning in research, extension and land production strategies is needed to address these problems and one factor which has yet to be acknowledged is the role of women in agriculture.

1.2 Of the women workers, 34.55% are cultivators, 43.56% labour and 4.63% engaged in livestock, forestry, fisheries etc. Of the marginal workers, 47.91% are cultivators, 41.43% are agricultural labour and only 1.64% are engaged in livestock etc. The rest are in the non-agricultural sector. Thus agriculture continues to be a major field for women's employment.

2. Nearly 63% of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture as compared to 78% of women. Almost 50% of rural female workers are classified as agricultural labourers and 37% as cultivators. The corresponding figures for men is the reverse; 55% cultivators and 24% as agriculture labour.

3. Statistics do not, however, provide a complete picture of the work done by women, the hours of seasonal, part-time, unpaid labour, apart from household work. Interestingly, there is no word in Hindi, and perhaps other Indian languages, for women farmers, though feminine counter parts exists for all other traditional occupations.

3.1 Paradoxically women's contribution to agriculture as well as in food processing and marketing, however, does not entitle them to be included as beneficiaries in major sponsored programmes in these sectors. This is due to a certain gender-blindness that permeates much of development thinking. Access to resources such as land, credit, appropriate technology and training has always been difficult for them.

3.2 Women's participation in agricultural extension, training and research is also minimal. They constitute a mere 0.59% of farm extension workers. Since almost all such workers are men, women's requirements for upgrading skills are often overlooked. Segregation also discourages contacts between women farmers and extension agents, who are mostly men.

3.3 It is now being accepted that development framework should cater to the needs and provide services to women who work longer and harder. In the tribal economy of Orissa, for example, women spend 105.4 days per year on shifting cultivation ('Bogodo'), whereas men spend only 50.11 days in the same activity .

3.4 In the Himalayas, a research study found, a pair of bullocks works for 1,064 hours, a man for 1,2.2 hours and a woman for 3,485 hours in a year on a one-hectare farm. For a one hectare farm women average 640 hours for agricultural operations like weeding, 384 hours for irrigation, 650 hours for transporting organic manure, 557 hours for sowing and 984 hours for harvesting and threshing.

3.5 Women in the three main rice-growing States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal make crucial contributions to the entire process of cultivation. Outside ploughing, an exclusively male task, women have a predominant role in transplanting, weeding, manuring and fertilizing, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, drying, stacking and carrying the produce. More than two-thirds of the inputs are provided by women.

4. While a fuller understanding of women's status and role is imperative, an exact quantification is

difficult, not only because of regional variations, but also on account of the different socio-economic contexts in which they work, historical differences, and the limited interpretation of the concept of 'worker' in Census Reports.

4.1 The incorporation of gender issues into the development agenda needs to recognize women's participation in farm labour at various levels - as farmers, producers of crops, protectors of livestock, and users of technology. They need to be seen as active agents in marketing, processing and storage of food and in innovative areas such as sericulture.

4.2 An attempt in this direction requires strengthening the agricultural base and augmenting of rural incomes. Major constraints may be identified, so that supportive measures can be suggested, like separate training, preferential membership in rural co-operatives, access to technology, credit and marketing and encouraging the formation of women's collectives for farming under programmes such as DWCRA. (See Box)

4.3 To achieve sustainability and equity, it is essential that agriculture be made more women-centered. If gender issues are to get primacy, an alternative analytical frame is essential. This thrust will have to be initiated, and carried forward until rural women are sufficiently motivated and empowered to avail of the benefits of the mainstream farm support systems.

4.4 As a beginning and in order to ensure the usefulness and relevance of the research and extension programmes to women the following points are being considered by the Central Ministry of Agriculture :

- Planning be based on accurate and appropriate data, which reflects the status and needs of women farmers;
- Women's development be viewed as part of the development of the total community and investments identified as necessary to secure it, be provided;
- Training for women, to begin with, be on the skills needed for securing awareness, motivation, employment, leadership and participation;
- Group approaches, be evolved in research and extension efforts targetting women farmers to optimise their impact,
- Imbalances in the workloads and working conditions be recognised,
- Employing of more female agricultural extension workers be promoted so as to reach rural women more satisfactorily,
- Educational and extension activities be enhanced to meet needs of women for increased managerial, organisational, entrepreneurial and decision making skills.

4.5 A gender sensitization module for policy makers has also been developed by the National Institute of Rural Development, based on extensive research in crop production, dairying, fisheries, forestry and sericulture and has been found to be extremely useful. This is being very effectively and widely disseminated.

5. Government is also implementing special projects in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, adopting innovative strategies and approaches. The basic assumption of these remain as follows:

- Improvement in the technical skills of women farmers with special focus on small and marginal farmers, would result in tangible increases in agricultural production, and
- Increased agricultural production is the base for improving the quality of life of these families and bringing about their economic stability.

5.1 In Orissa, the focus is on training of women as village extension workers. In the four districts trained at "Gramsevak Taaleem Kendras" (Extension Training Centres) for a duration of 12 to 14 months.

5.2 The curriculum is the same as that for male village extension workers, but additional information on the operations, such as post-harvesting technology, vegetable cultivation etc. are given due recognition. This approach holds tremendous potential and promise.

6. Besides these special projects, a Central sector scheme of women in agriculture has been formulated under the Eighth Plan and is under implementation in seven selected States, namely Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Maharashtra on a pilot-basis covering one district each. Implemented at the district level, it envisages provision of a package of training and extension support through facilitators and link workers. Each facilitator constitutes 10 farm women groups, each group consisting of 20 farm women.

6.1 Technical training programmes are conducted at the village level, and refresher training is provided later. Study tours and result demonstrations also form an integral part of the programme. The concept of self-help thrift groups has been introduced to enable women to plan their own activities.

7. The scheme of Farmers Training Centres was initiated in 1966-67 and there are 188 such Centres in the country. Training is provided in crop husbandry, horticulture, animal husbandry and allied subjects. This improves the knowledge base and makes women more receptive to new ideas propagated by the extension machinery. Half of the training courses are exclusively earmarked for women.

8 The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has established 183 Krishi Vigyan Kendras which provide need-based vocational training to practicing farmers, women farmers, rural youth, village artisans and landless labourers. It also plans to set up a National Research Centre with the following objectives:

- To create a comprehensive data base on all aspects of women in agriculture;
- To study their participation in agriculture and allied areas;
- To identify relevant available technologies;
- To study the impact of modern technology;
- To generate women-specific technology by research networking;
- To test and verify women specific technology and provide guidance on the basis of field work for technology refinement;
- To offer advanced training courses for research and extension scientists in order to sensitize them to women's role in agriculture;
- To act as a resource centre and clearing house for women-specific technologies for the Departments of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Social Welfare, Fisheries, Cooperation, Rural Development etc.

9 The National Sericulture Project was initiated a decade ago. Within this programme too, there has been a growing realisation that the gender component must be strengthened. As women are involved in the most critical stages of production of rearing, any effort to improve the quality of cocoons will necessarily imply increasing their participation not only in production but also in decision making processes.

10 The Small Farmers Agri Business Consortium, a Government programme introduced in 12 States is mainly focussing on projects exclusively managed by rural women, particularly in areas that are not agriculturally fertile. In West Bengal, in Midnapore, the members of the Zilla Parishad (District Council) are collaborating with the Bankura Women's

Organisation and the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), Delhi in order to replicate a successful sericulture project in a region that has a similar eco-system. (See Box 1)

11 These initiatives have been supplemented by efforts of non-governmental organisations. National and regional Summits of women have been organised over the last few years where valuable exchange of ideas and experiences have taken place between researchers, policy planners and implementors on the one hand and agricultural workers and grassroots' women on the other hand. This has created a synergy which will pave the way for acknowledgement of women's contribution to the economy and its back bone-agriculture.

Based on contributions received from the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India and Dr. Vina Mazumdar.

STRENGTH IN SOLIDARITY

A DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas--a Government Programme) group consisting of 15 women was formed in Mavatoor Village, Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh in 1987-88. The vicious cycle of poverty and isolation forced these women to form the group.

The group began to extract and sell sisal fibre and earned about Rs. 15,000 per month. Besides using the revolving fund for income generating activities the women also saved on a monthly basis and rotated the savings among the members. After two years they were thus able to save Rs. 48,000.

With this amount in 1990 the group members took on lease five acres of land in the same village from a big landlord. They raised vegetables, mulberry and ragi crop on the land and earned enough profit to purchase the same land from the landlord in 1992. They deepened an old well on the land and are now raising mulberry crops and rearing silk worms. In 1993 a shed for rearing silk worms was also provided by the Government with 40 percent contribution from the women. The group was also assigned three acres of Government land adjacent to the five acres.

Contributed by the Women's Development and Child Welfare Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad.

LAND DEVELOPMENT - A UNIQUE EXPERIMENT

" *Butterflies are dancing on Asan-Arjun trees,*
Shall I dance like that?
When can I open the doors of my mind,
And sing happily, drumming on my plate?"

This song, composed by a tribal woman reflects the aspirations of a large group of tribal women from Bankura District of West Bengal. These are not ordinary tribal women. They realised that individually they were weak and came together to form a women's collective, free from the interference of the family and in particular, men.

They forced the men to part with the unused wastelands. On acquiring the land they got assistance from the Government to convert this into productive assets. They raised plantations of host trees - Arjun and Asan - for rearing tasar silk cocoon and for Babui grass for rope making. With an additional input of training in scientific rearing practices, the women established their right to own land and demolished the myth of sexual division of labour.

Nearly 2000 women have procured more than 450 acres of wastelands from the men of their community and raised one million Arjun and Asan trees to rear Tasar silk cocoons, providing sufficient employment to the women during the first three years when the trees were nursed to maturity. The women have an assured employment varying between four to six months a year. They now work on the land they own, manage their own enterprise and devise their own norms for their lives.

Their lives have thus changed for the better. They have learnt to read and write, they value education for girls and boys and realise the importance of child care. To augment the household income they have floated thrift and credit programmes.

Since all this required mobilisation and linkages on a larger scale, the women formed a federation called Nari Bikash Sangha (Women's Development Association). This Federation not only interacts with Government functionaries and elected representatives but has also forged close ties with the women Panchayat members of the area.

Contributed by the Women's Development and Child Welfare Department Studies, Delhi.

WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING

Decision-making for the purpose of this chapter is to be taken in its widest connotation. Democratic and secular India endeavours to provide the necessary conditions for greater participation of women in all spheres of life. Equality of opportunity is guaranteed, and discrimination on grounds of sex, language, religion, class or creed is prohibited. Yet, in reality, women's participation in decision-making at all levels - national to local - is low.

1.1 The challenges in seeking to redress this inequality in a diverse and complex country like India - are enormous. They are related to overcoming attitudinal, institutional, cultural and social restrictions that have grown over centuries.

1.2 There is now, however, an acceptance that women's participation in decision-making in large enough numbers at every level is needed. Women's unique experiences and perspectives would enhance and alter definitions of problems and solutions and would also empower them.

2. The Committee on the Status of Women in India reviewed women's role and status in the political processes since Independence. The Committee observed that "all the indicators of participation, attitudes and impact came up with the same results - the revolution in social and political status of women for which Constitutional equality was to be only the means still remains a very distant objective. The large masses of women continue to lack spokespersons who understand their special problems and are committed to their removal in the respective bodies of the State".

2.1 While there are some spokespersons now, their voice is still somewhat feeble, because of their numbers. To actualise the Constitutional guarantees, gender visions and institutions need to be fostered.

3. Participation of women is an integral part of democratic process and strengthening the quality of civic life. As they are half the population, women must be in decision-making in all socio-economic and political organisations.

3.1 Obstacles which do not let women participate fully need to be identified and removed. Often structures and social norms are barriers, and stem from social conditioning which inhibits women from aspiring to decision-making positions. Governmental and non-Governmental interventions should facilitate and promote women's participation in decision-making.

4. In the privacy of a home, men and women seem to be keeping decision-making gender based. Micro level studies show that when women determine issues, it is generally in the traditional spheres and at a later stage in their lives. For example, relatively few women decide where and when to invest money or what crops to grow, on their own. Women voicing their feelings, dissent or preferences are the exception, rather than the rule. Women will assume leadership positions and be successful if they are enabled to develop that capability within the domestic sphere and the public sphere.

5. Is it the opportunity for decision-making for women which must come first or is it many more women in decision-making positions who will make a difference? Both are needed. Entry of a large number of women into decision-making processes can radically change the existing situation. If more and more women are associated at different levels, it is bound to affect public policy. Women' issues will be transformed into societal issues. The most critical role for women will be to resist inequality and injustice, nor merely for women, but for all.

5.1 So far, very few women have risen to high levels without personal sacrifice, suffering or discrimination. This can change when women get into existing patriarchal structures, stay on and exercise women's visions and leadership. Creating a suitable environment for free and fearless participation of women is a necessary pre-condition towards establishment of a just and equitable order.

6. This is not to cloud gender into an all pervasive homogeneous category. The commonality of sub-

ordination and nurturing quality of women which is often advanced in favour of this theory tend to over simplify the complex social factors that influence and govern the construction of gender roles in society. Women's empowerment and participation is however, a political question, linked to changes in power relations. It is through a mutually supportive process of empowerment that women can redirect and influence a political process which has largely failed to tap the energy, knowledge, and ability of women.

7. During India's freedom movement from British colonial rule, women had a tremendous opportunity to be part of a mass and popular, protest movement. Mostly a non-violent movement, it enabled women from all walks of life to join voluntarily and in large numbers. In the post Independence period, women have continued to speak out on all issues. The women's movement and women's organisations have advocated policy changes and Constitutional amendments, reflecting and articulating the experiences and aspirations of the nations' women.

8. Women, through participation in public life, have effected change in their circumstances. In the North Eastern region of the country, for example, there have been collective movements under the banner of Nisa Band (Prohibition) and Meira Paibi (Torch Bearer) since 1975 and 1980 respectively. They have organised campaigns against alcohol, trafficking in drugs, and other anti-social activities such as gambling and theft. The Meira Paibi guarded groups of families at night, circling the locality with burning torches. Sometimes they imposed a fine on the sale and consumption of liquor. At other times, they gathered at the police Station for release of persons who they felt had been arrested without reason.

8.1 Recently movements seeking a political identity based on caste, ethnicity, culture and religion have surfaced. Such movements view the empowerment of women as somewhat of a threat to their vision of a social order. Contemporary history indicates that in defining identities or values that have to be preserved, it is the perceptions of male political leaders that rule the day.

9. While women have often been in the forefront in mass movements, their presence has not been felt strongly in structured decision-making and institutions. Nor are they in positions of power. Even when they have been a Prime Minister or Chief Minister, they have not been able to change the lives of the mass of women. Working in a predominantly patriarchal structure with no gender sensitivity has made it difficult to bring about real and sustained changes for women.

10. Participation in public life has many facets. It includes activities which have strong bearing on groups and the community, the power to effectively influence elected representatives, decision-making processes as well as policies and actually alter existing situations wherever they are found to be clearly disadvantageous. While women should be positioned in large members at crucial levels for significant and effective exercise of power, they need to be equipped with suitable means to shoulder these responsibilities. Otherwise their representation would end up as mere tokenism.

11. In India, limited adult franchise was granted to women in 1937. After Independence, the Constitution granted equal voting rights. Women have participated in the political process - as voters, as candidates contesting elections, in deliberations in the State Assemblies and the National Parliament. They have held public office at different levels.

VOTING PATTERN

Gen. Elec-tions	Year	Total electors			%age electors participating in elections		
		F	M	T	F	M	T
I	1952	—	—	173.2	—	—	61.2*
II	1957	—	—	193.7	—	—	62.2*
III	1962	102.4	113.9	216.4	46.6	62.0	55.0
IV	1967	119.4	129.6	249.0	55.5	66.7	61.3
V	1971	—	—	274.1	—	—	55.3
VI	1977	154.2	167.0	321.2	54.9	65.6	60.5
VII	1980	170.3	185.2	355.6	51.2	62.2	56.9
VIII	1984	192.3	208.0	400.3	59.2	68.4	64.0
IX	1989	236.9	262.0	498.9	57.3	66.1	61.9
X	1991	245.6	261.8	507.4	49.5	61.6	55.7

Source : Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

* Calculated on the basis of valid votes polled.

Note : 1. Sex-wise break-up of electors is not available for the I, II, and V General Elections.

2. Data relates to Lok Sabha Election not available.

ELECTORS WHO VOTED IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES - 1991

(figures in millions)

States/UTs	Total Seats	Total Electors			Electors who voted		
		Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Assam	126	6.37	5.52	11.89	4.80	4.08	8.88
Haryana	90	5.25	4.47	9.72	3.60	2.81	6.41
Kerala	140	9.72	9.94	19.66	7.15	7.29	14.43
Tamil Nadu	234	20.20	19.70	39.92	13.28	12.15	25.48
Uttar Pradesh	425	43.59	35.72	79.31	23.28	15.83	39.11
West Bengal	294	22.12	19.26	41.38	17.15	14.63	31.78
Pondicherry	30	0.31	0.29	0.59	0.21	0.20	0.40
Grand Total	1339	107.58	94.90	202.48	69.51	56.99	126.49

Source : Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India.

12. Women's participation in elections depends on the mobilisation of the political parties, general awareness among the community of the importance of voting, and the overall political culture. No serious effort has as yet been made to mobilise women as a political constituency by any political party. Women are often projected as not being interested in and un-informed about matters political. Women are also not perceived as an organised interest or pressure group, so their needs are not taken into consideration. However, these stereotypes are not borne out by facts.

13. It is difficult, nonetheless, to generalise about the links between any single factor and political behaviour. They vary and are influenced by factors such as the social status of women, their economic position, cultural norms and above all, the regional outlook towards women's participation in public affairs.

14. The number of women contestants in Parliamentary elections has not increased over years. Political parties are still reluctant to field women candidates. The high cost of election campaigning is a deterrent to women candidates.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE LOK SABHA (LOWER HOUSE)

Term of Lok Sabha	Total Seats	No. of Women Members	Percentage
1952-57	489	14	2.8%
1957-62	494	18	3.6%
1962-67	494	30	6.0%
1967-71	520	31	6.0%
1971-77	520	20	3.8%
1977-80	542	19	3.5%
1980-84*	529	28	5.3%
1984-89	542	42	7.7%
1989-91**	523	23	4.4%
1991 - **	536	39	7.2%

* Elections were not held in 12 constituencies in Assam and in Meghalaya

** Elections were not held in J&K and Punjab. Figures include women elected from Punjab during the by elections in 1992.

Source : Election Commission of India

15. Though there has been a greater representation to women in the Rajya Sabha, it is by indirect election and nomination.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE RAJYA SABHA (UPPER HOUSE)

Year	Total seats	No. of Women Members	Percentage
1952	219	16	7.3%
1957	237	18	7.6%
1962	238	18	7.6%
1967	240	20	8.3%
1971	243	17	7.0%
1977	244	25	10.2%
1980	244	24	9.8%
1985	244	28	11.4%
1990	245	24	9.7%
1991	245	38	15.5%

Source : Election Commission of India

15.1 Some studies of Parliamentary participation indicate that women members participate more actively in 'women's issues' - health, welfare, atrocities against women, crimes like dowry and violations of human rights. This participation is confined to the more articulate women. In issues of defence, finance politics etc. their participation is relatively limited.

15.2 The table below shows women's representation in selected State Legislatures. The situation it appears has not improved much since the 1950s.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN STATE LEGISLATURES

States	Year	Total	Women	Year	Total	Women
Andhra Pradesh	1957	252	11	1994	294	9
Karnataka	1957	179	18	1994	224	7
Kerala	1957	127	6	1991	140	8
Madhya Pradesh	1957	218	26	1993	320	12
Punjab	1957	101	5	1992	117	6
Rajasthan	1957	136	9	1993	200	9
Tripura	1967	30	0	1992	60	2
Uttar Pradesh	1957	341	24	1993	425	12
West Bengal	1957	195	11	1991	294	18
Delhi	1972	56	3	1993	70	3

Source : A Status Report on Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1995.

15.3 Analyses of trends of nominations of women to contest elections to the State Legislatures indicate that there is a gender discrimination which is responsible for poor representation of women.

CANDIDATES NOMINATED & CONTESTED TO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES IN 1991

States/UTs	Total seats	Nominated			Contested		
		M	F	T	M	F	T
Assam	126	2012	61	2073	1607	50	1657
Haryana	90	3973	89	4062	1844	41	1885
Kerala	140	1297	39	1336	783	26	809
Tamil Nadu	234	4540	159	4699	2741	102	2843
Uttar Pradesh	425	14445	437	14882	7622	229	7851
West Bengal	294	2207	80	2287	1829	74	1903
Pondicherry	30	327	8	335	202	6	208
Grand Total	1339	28801	873	29674	16629	527	17156

Source : Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

16. At the national level, there is one woman senior Minister and 6 State Ministers, in a Cabinet of 74. There is one woman Governor and two women Chief Ministers.

16.1 Women Ministers are often given welfare-oriented portfolios - women and child development, culture and youth. Science and technology, finance, defence, foreign relations are rarely allotted to women, though women have demonstrated their ability to handle such portfolios.

16.2 The maximum number of women at decision making levels have been in the welfare and development oriented sectors or human resource development which includes education, culture, and women and child development.

16.3 In other wings of Government too, there has been limited representation. For example, there are only some women Judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts.

16.4 A few eminent women have no doubt, occupied important administrative positions such as Secretaries to Departments in the national Government as well as Chief Secretaries to State Governments. Currently, the Chairperson of the Union Public Service Commission and the University Grants Commission, are women.

16.4 According to available figures only around 5.71% of the total number of persons in administrative services are women.

16.5 It is noteworthy that within the premier civil services of the country, the representation of women is poor.

WOMEN IN SELECTED CIVIL SERVICES

Services	1987			1992		
	Men	Women	%age Women	Men	Women	%age Women
Indian Administrative Service	4209	339	7.5	4536	445	8.93
Indian Police Service	2418	21	0.9	2775	50	0.01
Indian Foreign Service	480	53	0.9	464	59	11.28

Source : Women in India, A Statistical Profile, 1988. Deptt. of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

16.6 Since relatively few women enter the civil services, several efforts have been made to improve the situation. The Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms of the Government of India has also provided, whenever possible, women officers on the selection boards for posts and services.

16.7 Monitoring the increase in the participation of women at all levels of decision making is essential. Updating of data and preparation of reports on women in administration and management is vital. Facilities provided for posting a working couple to the same place and support services of housing, creches, and schools need to be better implemented for these initiatives to have the desired impact.

17. Women also need to be better represented in the public sector undertakings, especially at decision making levels. It is estimated that only about 1.2% of the executive cadre in the private sector are women. They belong mainly to a few selected segments like advertising and hotels.

18. It is clear that increased participation of women in decision making at the national and regional level will not happen, unless a large number of women are enabled to participate effectively at the local level. The issues and processes here are easily comprehended, and directed to benefit those who need them most. Local Governments are the best training grounds for leadership, participatory planning, administrative skills and expertise.

19. Since 1959, the representation of women at grass-root level institutions of governance has been through several ups and downs and strategies such as nominations and limited quotas have been tried by States.

20. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 has directed all State Legislatures to amend their respective legislations to conform to the Constitutional Amendment within one year and introduce a three-tier system of local governance from the village to the district level. Each Panchayat is to have a uniform five year term and elections are to be held to constitute new bodies before the term expires. In the event of dissolution, elections are to be held within six months. In all Panchayats, seats are to be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their numbers in the population. One-third of the total number of seats is reserved for women. One-third of the Chairpersons of Panchayats at all levels are to be women.

20.1 Devolution of financial powers has been contemplated to effectively administer the subjects the Panchayats have been allocated. These are drinking water, agriculture, land and water conservation, communications, poverty eradication programmes, family welfare, women and child development, education, cultural activities, maintenance of community assets etc. The following figures will give an idea of the number of women's representatives anticipated to emerge as a result of the Amendment Act.

PROFILE OF PANCHAYAT MEMBERSHIP GRAM PANCHAYATS

1. Total number of Panchayats	2,25,000
2. Total number of members of Panchayats (with approx. 10 persons per Panchayats)	22,50,000
3. Total number of women members (1/3 of the total)	7,50,000
4. Total number of SC/ST members	1,50,000
5. Total number of 1/3 of SC/ST women members	50,000
6. Total number of Chairpersons	2,25,000
7. Total number of Women Chairpersons (1/3 of total Chairpersons)	75,000

INTERMEDIARY LEVEL

1. Total number of Block Samitis	5,100
2. Total number of members of Block Samitis (with approx. 10 members each)	51,000
3. Total number of women members of Samitis (1/3 of the total members)	17,000
4. Total number of Chairpersons of Samitis	5,100
5. Total number of women Chairpersons at Samiti Level (1/3 of the total Chairpersons)	1,700

DISTRICT LEVEL

1. Total number of Zilla Parishads	475
2. Total number of members of Zilla Parishad (approx. 10 members per Zilla Parishad)	4750
3. Total number of women members of Zilla Parishad (1/3 of total members)	1583
4. Total number of Zilla Parishad Chairpersons	475
5. Total number of women Zilla Parishad Chairpersons (1/3rd of total Chairpersons)	158

21. Women will be governing after being elected through a democratic process of universal adult franchise, multi-party system and mandatory elections at regular intervals. They will be a part of the Government in their area, at the village or a larger District level.

21.1 In States where elections have been held the results have been extremely encouraging. In the States of West Bengal and Karnataka women have gained more than the numbers of seats reserved for them. In other States, the reserved quota has been filled. The overwhelming response has been unprecedented in the history of the country.

WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

			GRAM PANCHAYATS (Village)			PANCHAYAT SAMITIS (Block)			ZILLA PARISHAD (District)			
Sl.	State	Year	No. of Gram Panchayat (GP)	Total No. of Members	No. of Women Members	No. of Panchayat Samitis (PS)	Total No. of Members	No. of Women Members	No. of Zilla Parishad (ZP)	Total No. of Members	No. of Women Members	Remarks
1.	Gujarat	1995	13,256	64,052	19,936* (31.1)	182	3,765	1,275 (33.84)	19	761	254 (33.38)	*1415 more women members are to be elected.
2.	Haryana	1994	5,958	54,159	17,928 (33.10)	110	2,418	807 (33.37)	16	303	101 (33.33)	
3.	Karnataka	1993	5,641	80,627	37,689 (46.74)	175	3,340	1,343 (40.2)	20	919	335 (36.4)	
4.	Kerala**	1995	990	10,700	3,878 (36.2)	152	1,543	565 (36.6)	14	300	104 (34.6)	** Election will be held on 23625 September, 1995.
5.	Madhya Pradesh	1994	30,922	4,43,429	1,47,809 (33.33)	459	9,097	2,991 (32.88)	45	942	315 (33.44)	
6.	Punjab	1993	11,596	60,584	8,776 (14.49)	136	24,024	8,222 (34.22)	14	273	89 (32.60)	
7.	Rajasthan	1995	9,189	1,03,712	36,722 (35.4)	237	5,231	1,738 (33.23)	31	997	331 (33.20)	
8.	Tripura	1994	525	5,427	1,809 (33.33)	16	196	67 (34.18)	3	70	24 (34.29)	
9.	West Bengal	1993	3223	61,011	21,489 (35.22)	328	9453	3182 (33.66)	16	656	224 (34.15)	

Figures in brackets are percentages

Source : Institute of Social Sciences, PRIs Data Centre, New Delhi.

The Constitutional Amendment (73rd & 74th) is applicable only for 21 states. Four states are exempted. There will be about 1 million elected women members in Panchayats and Municipalities in India when elections are completed.

21.2 The 73rd Amendment Act has the potential of enabling women to transform State structures from within and is the first step of an emerging new grassroots level leadership. This is crucial in order to change the quality, content and nature of leadership for development. The participation of women indicates that they were ready to avail of the landmark opportunity provided to them.

22. Surveys indicate that the most significant impact of elections on women has been in the areas of social and gender relations and increased self confidence.

22.1 These developments have implications for the future which need careful study. Amongst them is awareness of the impediments to the transference of power to women, which could limit the chances of fundamental transformation of politics and socio-economic realities.

22.2 Patriarchal control in all aspects of life severely limits the potential and scope of women's actual and defacto participation in public life. Multiple burdens make it difficult for women to avail completely of such politically significant change. The climate of present-day politics, dominated by elements of criminalisation,corruption, muscle power and violence inhibits women's full participation in the political process. Lack of awareness of the possibilities of political participation, means inadequate contribution to public affairs. Lack of orientation, training and preparation to fulfill the roles and responsibilities, as well as abrupt change in their lives further underscore the nature of challenges to be confronted.

23. Recognising these obstacles the Government, non-Governmental Organisations, women's groups and activists have been strategising to provide appropriate inputs to women.Women have been mobilised to participate in elections as candidates and voters, and to be vigilant citizens where elections have been held. Communities have received gender sensitisation to facilitate acceptance of the new roles assigned to women. Leadership and organisational training of women has been conducted to enable them to be dynamic change agents. Networks have been interacting, to influence mass based political structures to provide more space to women.

24. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act extends similar provisions as the 73rd Amendment to the urban Local Bodies, Municipalities and Notified Area Authorities. It is equally significant in the political empowerment process of women of the country.

25. Decentralisation is essential for effective mainstreaming of women's concerns in development. Identifying women's needs at the micro-level and the constant feedback - data and information of the positive and negative effects of policies and programmes - is an integral part of planning. As individuals and representatives of interest groups, women should be encouraged to participate in political institutions and processes. The status quo can change when women's concerns gain political prominence and when women are in positions to convert them into a political will.

26. Women in decision making and leadership roles at the grassroots, regional and national levels is a major change factor. Change will have a different pace in different parts of the country, but its direction will be towards greater participatory democracy, social equity and gender justice.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Dr.Padma Ramachandran. Further inputs provided by Dr.Vina Mazumdar and Dr Devaki Jain

EDUCATION FOR EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

A major change in the last few decades has been the recognition of the centrality of education in the struggle to achieve women's equality and empowerment. The close connection between education and development, the need to take a holistic view of the issue and the need for convergance of literacy and education, as well as other related services, so as to effect efficiency and improve the economy are acknowledged by policy makers.

2. The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted in 1990 at Jomtien, Thailand, had made universalising access and promoting equity one of its main objectives.

3. The overall picture of girls and women's education is one of limited opportunity, numerous obstacles and questionable quality and relevance. .Available evidence suggests that an explicit policy focus on female education is amply justified on the basis of equity, economic productivity and social benefits.

4. At the time of Independence, India's education system was not only small but also characterised by intra and inter-regional, as well as structural imbalances. As education is linked with the totality of the development process, several Articles in the Constitution emphasised certain key principles which would underline the educational system in the country. The Directive Principles contained in Article 45 enjoined that the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution, compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. As envisaged by the Education Policy of 1968, a broadly uniform pattern of education emerged all over the country. The National Policy of Education (NPE) of 1986, updated in 1992 is a land-mark in Indian education. What the policy proposes is a dual track approach designed to promote simultaneously adult literacy and primary education, with a focus on girls and other disadvantaged groups. It postulates intergration of gender perspectives in all aspects of planning. There is a pronounced policy shift from an equalisation of educational opportunity to education for women's equality. It enjoins that the education system should play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women, foster the development of new values through revised curricula and text books, provide systematic training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators -all through the active involvement of educational institutions. The removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in education, are given an overriding priority.

5. In the post Independence period, literacy rates have shown a substantial incease . Female literacy has also increased . During the decade 1981 to 1991, female literacy increased at a faster rate than male literacy. Nonetheless, it is a matter of concern that the rural-urban differential in literacy increased in 1991. Roughly, the literacy rate for women is at the same level as that of men three decades ago. There are also wide regional variations between States like Kerala and Rajasthan. The regional concentration of female illiteracy is highlighted by the fact that 155 out of the 247 districts where female literacy rates are lower than the national average, are concentrated in the four States of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar. Removal of gender and regional disparities is therefore basic to any effort to achieve universalisation and full literacy.

6. As with other educational indicators, regional and gender disparities are conspicuous in regard to enrolment and retention. Girls' enrolment has grown at the primary stage and upper primary stage. The rate of growth of enrolment of girls has been higher than that of boys but disparities still persist The drop-out rate of girls of the primary and upper primary stage are higher than that of boys.

7. Government has identified the urgent priorities as being related to the following aspects:

- access to, and improved quality of education for girls and women,

- removal of obstacles that hamper active participation in education of girls and women, and
- elimination of gender stereotyping in education

7.1 The gap between boys and girls' participation in education is in essence, the problem of the girl child. The disparity, particularly in the rural areas, reflects the social attitude to the girl-child. While the solution to this problem does not lie entirely in the educational system, education can certainly play a positive role of social engineering in the improvement of her status.

7.2 The constraints to girls' education relate to demand and supply factors. The demand factors are related inter alia, with poverty situations, where the family is not in a position to bear the direct and opportunity costs of girls' schooling, as well as social and cultural traditions deriving from low status, early marriage, poor health, poor nutrition and future job market discrimination. On the supply side, are the realities of insufficient school places for girls, distant location of schools, inflexible timings, irrelevant and gender insensitive curricula, lack of female teachers etc.

7.3 Both demand and supply side inventions are thus called for to improve girls' participation. These interventions need to be attitudinal as well as monetary. The main demand side interventions so far, have been programmes for awareness generation among girls and women and various incentive schemes which reduce the direct cost of education such as hostel facilities, uniforms, textbooks, stipends, attendance allowance and stationary grants. The main supply side interventions have been gender sensitisation of the education system and its functionaries so that gender concerns are reflected across the board, in all educational programmes, more particularly in the areas of basic education.

7.4 The other important intervention is related to recruitment of more female teachers. The proportion of female teachers have been increasing gradually. In 1986-87, 40.2% of the primary school teachers were women as compared to 15% in 1950-51. The corresponding proportion for the upper primary stage were 30.92% and 15% respectively. Under the Operation Black Board, 59% of the teachers appointed were women. There is, however, a concentration of women teachers in urban areas and inter-State disparities are sharp. The problem is basic as rural girls do not get as far as secondary education to become eligible for entry into primary teachers' Training Institutions. In 1986-87 for every 100 rural girls in Class I only 1 was in Class XII.

7.5 Another supply side intervention is in the form of non-formal education programmes. Under the scheme 90% assistance is given for non-formal Centres run exclusively for girls. The scheme has recently been revised so as to provide more facilities for educating girls by increasing the ratio of Centres exclusively for girls from 25% to 40% of the total.

8. Several innovative initiatives have been attempted to provide replicable models for enhancing girls' and women's involvement in literacy and education. Among the most successful is "Mahila Samakhya" which literally means men and women's equality through education. It is conceived as a women's empowerment process which does not aim to deliver services, but seeks to bring about changes in women's perspectives about themselves and that of society in regard to women's traditional roles. It endeavours to create an environment for women to seek knowledge and information in order to make informed choices and create circumstances in which women can learn at their own pace and rhythm.

8.1 The programme is being implemented in 14 districts spread over 4 States of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The basic unit of the programme is a "sangha" or village level women's collective. The "sangha" includes the poorest women in the village, most of them from socially disadvantaged groups. The majority are illiterates. The key programme functionaries are "sahayoginis" who provide resource support to the women's groups. Inputs are specially designed to meet the specific needs articulated by the "sangha".

8.2 As women become more aware of the comple web of factors which have deprived and marginalised them, they begin to identify the ability to read and write as a skill which can contribute to the process of their empowerment. The issue of literacy is thus integrated with other issues crucial for the group. They may be the problem of drinking water or legal remedies for woman's problems. In this sense, the programme has been seen as a major break through and is taken as a valid model for adoption by other programmes for women's literacy.

9. Government has also set up a National Literacy Mission (NLM). The objective, in quantitative terms was, to start with, to impart functional literacy to 80 million adult illiterate persons in the age group of 15-35 (30 million by 1990 and an additional 50 million by 1995). This target has since been revised to making 100 million persons literate during the Eighth Plan The wave which started with the Southern and Eastern States has extended to all parts of the country.

9.1 The important characterstic of the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) organised under the Mission are that they are area specific, time bound, volunteer based, cost effective, and outcome oriented.

9.2 An evaluation of these Campaigns by an Expert Task Force has shown that they have successfully promoted social and economic integration. Another major strength has been the impressive participation of women in larger numbers than men belying all earlier assumptions about their disinterest in literacy and education. Women were found to be much more confident, more articulate and more assertive after going through the TLCs. The impact of womens' mobilisation was found to be at the heart of the success of the campaigns. In this manner, they prepared themselves as active participants in the cumulative process of change and took charge of their lives.

10. Other successful innovations in women 's education are the "Lok Jumbish", "Shiksha Karmi Project" (Education Workers' Project) in Rajasthan and the Foster Child Scheme in Maharashtra.

11. Within the formal structures of education, too, important programmes have been introduced of which a few illustrations are provided. The District Primary Education Project (DPEP) has been launched in 42 districts over 7 States of Assam, Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. It seeks to operationalise the strategies of decentralised planning in order to universalise elementary education. One of the conditions for selection of districts is that it should be educationally backward with female literacy below the national average. DPEP has a well defined gender focus and incorporates a component of women's empowerment through education as well as special interventions for girls. (See Box).

12. Efforts are made to ensure that at least 1/3rd of the students in 'Navodaya Vidyalayas' (Model Schools) and 'Kendriya Vidyalaya's' (Central Schools) are girls.

13. Education is free in Government schools for girls up to class XII, and in all schools upto Class VIII in Punjab, Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Meghalaya and Chandigarh. In Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Mizoram and Lakshadweep it is free in all schools upto secondary stage. In Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Tripura, West Bengal and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Pondicherry, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Sikkim it is free in all schools upto Class XII.

14. The efforts of the private and voluntary sector in promoting girls' and womens' education in the

country are significant and have been widely acknowledged.

15. India has a massive system of higher education. According to the latest data available from the Central Education Department, there are 196 University level Institutions serving 4.3 million students. The enrolment of women students at the beginning of the year 1993-94 was 16.64 lakhs as against 15.94 lakhs in the previous year. This is an increase of more than 4 times since Independence. At the post graduate level the enrolment of women was 35.1% of the total enrolment. The enrolment figures was the highest in Kerala (53.4%) and lowest in Bihar (16.9%). Notwithstanding these disparties it is clear that the proportion of women's enrolment is being bridged at a fast rate. Their performance levels have also been highly satisfactory.

16. The participation of woman in technical and professional streams has shown marked increase from a little over 6000 in 1950-51 to 1.46 lakhs in 1986-87, which is an increase of 23 times. There has been a noticeable growth in the number of women students in the Engineering and Technology streams in the Indian Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics. As against 40 women students in 1950-51 (0.3%) the numbers rose to 16.67 thousand in 1986-87 (7.7%) and 78.3 thousand in 1993-94 (13.1).

16.1 The same trend extends to other professional courses such as law, medicine and management. There are a large number of exclusive women's Colleges and Universities which seek to play a distinct gender sensitive role, which is important in a largely traditional society such as India's.

17. There are Women's Study Centres and Cells in selected Universities and Colleges. These Centres have been envisaged as a trinity of knowledge building, action at the societal level and commitment to gender issues to bring about gender equity and justice. The University Grants Commission has set up 22 Centres in Universities and 11 Cells for Women's Studies in selected Colleges. The Centres have, since 1986, acted as catalytic agents, within the framework of higher education, through research, training, extension, documentation and information sharing for social change and empowerment of woman. As these Centres and Cells have been particularly impactful, there is a greater need to have similar arrangements in all Universities and many more Colleges in the country. There is also a need to locate adjunct Resource Centres in at least one University in each State to network, coordinate as well as service the requirements of the Women's Study Centres and Cells. Such steps will be valuable in breaking prevalent gender biases and furthering an understanding of women's needs and perspectives, through mainstream structures.

18. Another important initiative has been that of the University Grants Commission in creating posts of part time Research Associateships for women in Science and Humanities, including Social Sciences, Engineering and Technology.

19. Greater involvement of women in the Distance Education System and Open Universities is also likely to considerably extend the outreach of the educational infrastructure. Use of the electronic media to disseminate gender inclusive and gender sensitive educational programmes is also contemplated and being currently pilot tested.

20. Vocational education is a distinct stream, intended to prepare students for identified occupations. The involvement of girls in vocational programmes is extremely vital. Efforts are made to encourage girls to learn new emerging skills and technologies. Programmes with emphasis on enterpreneurial skills for employment in micro-enterprises are also made available to them.

20.1. The National Vocational Training Institute for Women and 8 Regional Vocational Training Institutes provide advanced skills in selected trades with high employment potential. To augment the existing strength of Industrial Training Institutes, (ITIs),100 new ITIs and women's wings are being set up.

20.2. The Condensed Course for Educational and Vocational Training for adult women aims at providing new vistas of employment through continuing education and vocational training for women and girls who drop-out from the mainstream educational system.

20.3. Career counselling is also being actively promoted to ensure that the skills acquired by girls and women are appropriately utilised by them.

21. Girls' and women's education are now squarely on the development agenda. In order that these are translated into reality, wide societal awareness is needed to be generated and consolidated. It is only then that the unfinished tasks can be taken up with a sense of urgency. While the impetus will come mainly from the Government, support needs to be provided by non-Governmental and strong private organisations who have vast experience, especially at the micro level. Education is a valued investment not only in human capital, but for the future of the country.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Aparna Basu . Further inputs provided by Department of Education, Government of India and Dr. Vina Mazumdar.

GENDER FOCUS IN THE DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME (DPEP)

The District Primary Education Programme has been taken up in 42 districts of seven States, all of which are educationally less developed, with low levels of female literacy. The decentralised implementation plans include specific interventions for girls.

DPEP is a major initiative aimed at achieving the goals of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in a replicable, cost-effective and sustainable manner. The programme builds on the experience of earlier efforts for UEE which brought home the need to redesign primary education as a whole, instead of a piecemeal implementation of schemes.

The major strengths of this programme are its sensitivity to local conditions rather than a rigid framework. The approach is contextual, tailored to meet local situations and needs. Planning and management are decentralised and the emphasis is on involving local communities.

A gender perspective has been incorporated in all aspects of planning and implementation, and is an integral part of the programme.Programme goals include a specific focus on reduction of gender disparities in education, as reflected in lower enrolment, retention and achievement of girls, particularly those from socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

Interventions for girls' education initiated under the programme include;

- Alternative schooling.
- Flexible school timings to accommodate girls' needs.
- Residential schools.
- Gender-sensitive curricula and textbooks.
- Recruitment of women teachers.
- Improved school buildings with toilets for girls.
- Educational incentives.
- Gender sensitisation for teachers and project managers.

Apart from these specific strategies designed to enhance girls' access, enrolment and retention in the school system, the programme recognises the crucial importance of enabling local communities, particularly women, to play an active role in every aspect of the programme. They include the following:

- Formation of village-level women's collectives and training of local women activists to catalyse collective actions around educational issues.
- Empowerment of local bodies such as Village Education Committees, Mother-Teacher Associations and women's groups, to enable them to take the responsibility for promoting education in their areas.
- Intensive capacity building for community and women's groups to focus on issues of education for girls.
- Involvement of community and women's organisations in mobilisation and school management, and in monitoring enrolment, retention, levels of achievement and classroom transactions, with emphasis on girls.
- Mobilising informed and active participation at the local level to build and sustain an environment supportive to girls' education.

Contributed by the Department of Education, Government of India

WOMEN'S HEALTH NEEDS

Women's health covers mortality, morbidity, nutritional status and reproductive health. Linked to these are environmental degradation, violence and occupational hazards, all of which have implications for women's health.

2. The health status of a population is one of the crucial elements in the assessment of the quality of life. More precisely, indicators, namely, maternal mortality (MMR) and morbidity rates, infant mortality rates (IMRs), life expectancy, fertility rates, studied alongwith statistics on female literacy rates, work participation rates, age at marriage, cases of recorded violence, malnutrition, etc., provide pointers to the physical status and well-being of women.

3. The health of Indian women is intricately related to the socio-economic status of the households to which they belong and their age and kinship/marital status within the households. Given the predominantly patriarchal set-up, women and girls get a lesser share in the intra-household distribution of health goods and services, compared to men and boys. However, in the intra-household distribution of labour, women get the major share of economic, procreative and family responsibilities. Due to the competing demands on their time and energy, as well as their socialisation, women tend to neglect their health. The lesser access to food coupled with neglect invariably leads to a poor nutritional status and a state of illhealth for most women.

4. Women's health plays an important role in determining the health of the future population, because women's health has an integenerational effect. The cumulative impact of the low health situation of women is reflected in the high MMRs, the incidence of low-birth weight babies, high pre-natal mortality and foetal wastage and consequent high fertility rates.

5. Maternal deaths constituted 1.1% of the total reported deaths in 1990. The MMR for India is high. Further, it is estimated that 15% of deaths among women in the reproductive age group (15-44 years) are maternal deaths. The specific causes of maternal deaths show that bleeding and anaemia are the two major causes of death followed by abortion and toxaemia. Severe anaemia is one of the important reasons for abortions, premature births and low birth weight of babies.

6. The causes of death (1990) data for rural areas show that infant deaths are mainly in the category of disorders of the respiratory system. Although IMR is higher for females under all major causes of death, the sex differences in mortality is highest for the 1-4 years age group. Causes such as accidents and injuries, fevers and digestive disorders, rather than diseases of the nervous system or the circulatory system are mainly responsible for the high female child mortality. This clearly indicates that rather than congenital diseases, the diseases related to living conditions and negligence are the causes of female child moratlity.

7. The concern for the reduction of Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) by the Government dates back to the Bhore Committee Report (1943) and the Mudaliar Committee Report (1961) which laid emphasis on nutrition, health education, maternal and child health, among other health issues. The Bhore Committee identified children, specially in the first year of life, old people and women during their reproductive ages, as specially vulnerable groups in the community.

8. The Maternal and Child Health Programmes (MCH) outlined in the various Five Year Plans are based mainly on the principles enunciated by the Bhore Committee.

9. According to estimates, for every maternal death, 13 to 100 women face severe life threatening complications. Systematic data on the morbidity conditions of women are not available. Some micro studies indicate high rates of morbidities

among women which go under-reported. General and gynaecological morbidities as well as those related to contraception use, sterilisation, menstruation, menopause, cancers of the breast and reproductive organs need further attention. Much of women's morbidities are often treated as 'normal' and are attributed to female biology. The concomitant secrecy associated with much of women's morbidities conceal their actual incidence and also prevent effective intervention.

10. The Child Survival and Safe Motherhood (CSSM) Programme launched in August 1992 underlines the high priority accorded by Government to various programmes for improving the health status of women and children and the reduction of maternal, infant and child mortality and morbidity rates. The CSSM programme is directed at achieving 9 of the 17 goals of the National Health Policy (1983) which are related to maternal and child health. The interventions for reducing morbidity and mortality include among others, newborn care, immunization, oral rehydration therapy, treatment of pneumonia, Vitamin A prophylaxis, TT immunization, prevention and treatment of anaemia, promotion of institutions for maternal care, treatment of maternal complications, management of obstetric emergencies and promotion of birth spacing .

10.1 The Programme addresses the major causes of morbidity and mortality which are preventable by readily available and cost-effective interventions. Many of these interventions are on-going under the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Programme but are being integrated, coverage levels increased and quality of services improved through supply of additional equipment, regular supply of essential drugs and retraining of medical and paramedical personnel. Strengthening the care for the new born and emergency obstetric services are the new thrust areas. The access established under the immunization programme is being utilized to extend and intensify other requisite services.

11. Though the proportion of trained attendants at birth is increasing, the majority of the domiciliary births are attended by the traditional "dai" (birth attendant) especially in the rural and tribal areas. Recognising the role of traditional "dais", the "Dai Training Scheme" has been in operation for more than a decade to modernize traditional maternal care and delivery techniques. Strengthening the role of the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), the lady Health Visitor (LHV) and the Multipurpose Health Worker in the health system are also important.

12. An extensive network of over 2000 Community Health Centres, 22,000 Primary Health Centres and 131,000 village level Sub-Centres has been set up to provide primary health care, including maternal care and family planning services at the grass roots level. Recognizing the need to provide quality services, emphasis has been laid on training of medical and paramedical functionaries deployed to manage the institutions set up under the health care system. The ready accessibility to health care facilities will enable the women to seek health care .

13. It is recognized that the lack of female medical officers in the peripheral health institutions is a detriment to women seeking early treatment, especially for reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases. Government is considering a project to strengthen treatment facilities for reproductive tract infections and IEC activities for dissemination of information on sexuality and reproductive health to women and adolescents. The need for interpersonal communication has been clearly recognized. Village level women's groups named "Mahila Swasthya Sanghas" are being organized rapidly.

14. It is currently estimated that there may be 1 to 2 million HIV infected persons in India, of whom at least 1/3rd are women. The National AIDs Control Programme has been launched through the

National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) with the objectives of prevention of sexual, perinatal and parenteral transmission of HIV infection by timely intervention. Strategies include counselling, screening and provision of appropriate health care to high risk categories, health education and popularizing the use of condoms to reduce sexual transmission, screening of blood prior to transfusion, sterilization of medical equipment and infection control measures in existing health facilities.

14.1 Efforts have been made to develop linkages between NACO and Family Welfare Programme. One of the steps in this direction is the upgradation of the quality of the condoms to make them suitable for the dual function of AIDs control and contraception. The social marketing of condoms to improve accessibility is another important measure. While it is not cost effective or operationally feasible to undertake routine screening of all pregnant women and infants for HIV infection, medical and paramedical personnel are being trained to recognise people at risk and to treat sexually transmitted diseases.

14.2 It is important to remember, however, that womens' ability to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS depends to a large extent on the partner's acknowledgement of the need for such protection and the consistent use of protective measures. Studies indicate that the power relations between sexual partners is unfavourably tilted away from women, who have very little control over the sexual relationship, including the frequency and the type of sex and the contraceptives to be used.

15. Research data indicates a decline in fertility rates with women's development and economic advancement. Women acknowledge the need for contraception and limiting the number of pregnancies. However, their utilisation of these services depends on several inter-related factors. These are low decision-making power in the family, especially in the early years of marriage, poor health, high pregnancy wastage, social pressures against contraception before completion of the desired family size, general preference for sons and secondary infertility etc. The safety and efficacy of various methods of contraception, the quality of delivery and follow-up are other major issues to be attended to. Women can exercise reproductive choices only after they acquire control over their sexuality and life situations.

15.1 The National Family Planning Programme was launched in 1951 with the objective of reducing the birth rate to the extent necessary to stabilize the population at a level consistent with the requirements of the national economy' and improving the health status of women. The programme is purely voluntary. In keeping with the democratic traditions of the country, it seeks to promote planned parenthood through voluntary and free choice of family planning methods, best suited to the individual acceptors. Couple protection rates are sought to be increased by health education and by improving the accessibility and reach of family planning services. Male and female sterilization, intra-uterine devices (IUDs), oral pills and condoms are made widely available under the National Programme.

15.2 The Family Welfare Programme has recorded some achievements since its inception. The crude birth rate and IMR have declined, and the total fertility rate has come down to 3.6 in 1992 from a level of over 6 in the fifties. The level of Couple Protection Rate has increased from 10.4% in 1970-71 to 43.5% at the end of March, 1992. It is estimated that 168 million births have been averted on account of the programme.

15.3 Sterilisation had been an important method followed in India. Its importance, however, has been declining over the years. The contribution of sterilisation to the annual family planning acceptors has now come down from 32.9% in 1975-76 to 15.8% in 1991-92. Sterilisation at present is largely confined to women. The proportion of tubectomies to total sterilisation has increased from

10.4% in 1967-68 to 95.7% in 1991-92.

15.4 To popularise male sterilisation, a new simpler method of performing vasectomy - "No Scalpel Vasectomy" - has recently been introduced.

15.5 Over-emphasis on terminal methods in the past, inadequate counselling and follow-up services for promotion of spacing methods and logistical problems related to their supplies have constrained adoption of contraceptive methods by younger couples. This is being increasingly rectified. The aspects planned are :

- Stepping up research activities to introduce new contraceptives and improve quality with a view to facilitate informed choice by the acceptors at different stages of their reproductive life cycles.
- Improving distribution of contraceptives and enlarging their production base.
- Improving client-counselling and follow-up care.
- Dropping–on a pilot-basis–target oriented approach to population control.

15.6 An integrated IEC (Information, Education and Communication) strategy which is comprehensive, community based and target-specific has been evolved and the approach has been recently re-oriented so as to broadbase the information and dissemination channel laying stress on inter-personal communication, while simultaneously utilising the mass media approach. The IEC strategies increasingly focus on quality of life issues and responsible parenthood–and not just on adoption of contraception–decentralised production and dissemination of material to cater to the specific local needs.

16. Support of the voluntary and corporate sector is also being sought for creating awareness and promoting the small family norm. Relevant procedures have been simplified. Allocation of funds has been increased substantially from Rs.51 million in 1992-93 to Rs.96 million in 1995-96. In 1994-95, over 800 NGOs collaborated with the Government of India in family planning and population control activities and received grants. Workshops were also organized to discuss issues of interest and common problems. Securing greater involvement of and more active participation of village Panchayats, women and youth organisations, private medical practitioners, organised sector and cooperative institutions, is a thrust area.

17. The nutritional status of women especially that of the rural poor is far from what is desired. Inspite of the prophylactic programmes against nutritional anaemia targetted at the expectant and lactating mothers, these women continue to suffer from acute anaemia. It has been pointed out that much wasting and stunting of growth takes place during young age. With early and multiple pregnancies women miss the opportunity of attaining full bodily growth. The low nutritional status of women in India applies to all the age groups but is more acute in the cases of young girls, pregnant and aged women. While in the lowest socio-economic groups the low nutritional status of women is mainly due to poverty and the burden of family responsibilities, in the lower middle income groups, it is aggravated by general neglect and is the indirect result of stronger gender discrimination. The economic value of women determines their survival and this is evident from the fact that in the landless agricultural households where women's labour participation is higher, the sex ratio and the mortality differentials favour women.

17.1 Although there exists some nutritional data, the extent of poverty induced undernutrition in India is not exactly known. The normal trend-level shortfall in food intake in the poorer households is due to the seasonability of food availabilty. Food shortages become severe in the events of crop failure, drought and fluctuations in food prices. The rural poor, especially women and children, are thus worst affected in terms of poverty induced undernutrition.

17.2 There are several Government programmes for remedying the trend of shortfall in food intake among the rural poor, with women and children as special target groups. These are:

- The Public Distribution System,
- The Public Employment Programmes, and
- The Special Feeding Programmes.

17.3 Although the first two programmes are not aimed directly at improving the nutritional status of the people,they nevertheless have an impact on the nutritional status of the poor and the vulnerable groups.

18. Women are profoundly affected by environmental degradation because they depend on bio-mass based resources for food, fuel, fodder, water and medicinal needs. Environmental degradation leads to a substantial increase in women's time and energy spent in gathering these resources. Several studies have shown an increase in male migration to the cities, due to the decline in access to land for cultivation, fodder for cattle, minor forest produce for consumption and sale, etc. Women are left behind to fend for the families, leading to an increase in the physical and mental stress levels among rural and tribal women.

19. In the urban context, majority of migrants live in squatter sttlements, on construction sites and disease prone areas, with lack of water supply, sewerage, garbage removal or electricity facilities. Medical care, access to education and the Public Distribution System are inadequate or absent. Migrant men, women, and children are thus a vulnerable group exposed to the deteriorating urban enrivonment.

20. Women's work and the conditions of work in the informal sector are oppressive and exploitative, because of low wages, long hours of work, lack of provision for holidays and maternity leave. These lead to malnutrition, anaemia, morbidities and poor occupational health. The exposure of women to sexual exploitation, is also common in the informal sector.

20.1 The constant tension and anxiety in these situations result in continuous pressure on women and affects their mental health.

20.2 Due to the extensive use of pesticides in agriculture, women agricultural workers are often found to suffer from visual impairment, dislike of bright lights, night blindness, mental disturbances, anxiety, insomnia and depression. The National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector has generated exhaustive data and analyses on these groups of women and made various recommendations for their protection and empowerment.

21. There is an increasing trend of violence on women which is, often, unfortunately unreported. When reported, they are recorded merely as official statistics. Behind these statistics, there are women who undergo traumatic impact, which leave deep marks on their mental health.

21.1 Rapid urbanisation, lack of employment opportunities, loss of employment, consumption of alcohol, effect of films on crime and sex deviancy, widespread circulation of pornographic literature, precipitate violence on women and girls. These processes have profound effects on their physical and mental well being. However, research efforts in the area of women's mental health, in general, and the effect of violence on mental health in particular, are scanty.

22. Public debate continues to highlight the importance of taking a holistic approach to women's health and recognising it as a basic human right. It also underlines the criticality of effective health service delivery for women.

23. Closer co-operation between the Government, non-Governmental Organisations and the community is required to make these aspirations a reality.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Dr. Lakshmi Lingam. Further inputs provided by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and Avabai B. Wadia.

ACTIVITIES OF THE FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Non-Governmental Organisations have an important role to play in the promotion of the health of women. This must be undertaken not only by women's organisations, but by those which have a mixed membership and are working in the wider range of social development.

The Family Planning Association of India (FPAI) which is the oldest and largest voluntary organisation in this field, was founded with the primary aim of improving women's health which was affected by too many pregnancies occuring too closely. It evolved programmes for providing education and services in the spacing and limiting the size of the family and developed a wide range of activities for promoting social development. They not only promote contraception, but includes a wide range of education and services such as mother and child care, nutrition, infertility advice and treatment, education in human sexuality, in population dynamics and other concerns of young people.

The empowerment of women is an important objective in its own right, and the FPAI has evolved a number of programmes which have helped to increase literacy and education among girls and women, skills-training whereby income-generating activities have been undertaken by them. Education for dealing with social questions such as raising the age of marriage, equal treatment for sons and daughters and promoting the schooling of all children have been included, too. The FPAI which is working in over 3000 villages, (apart from its 38 urban Branches) has established various types of Local Volunteer Groups of villagers with more than 90,000 volunteers, of whom at least 1/3rd are women.

In 1994, the FPAI carried out the following activities specifically for women's development:

- Special Projects for women's development and family planning in 10 locations covering a population of 5,37,807 in 607 villages. These include Literacy Centres, Skills Development Centres, Short Term Courses, Schools, Balwadis, financial support to 219 needy women, project management support, and activities in various social fora. The total number of women beneficiaries is 20,009.
- Young Women's Information Centres for girls between 12-20 years. 55 such Centres have been established in 10 branches. One of the campaigns, conducted successfully, identified 2,810 girls of whom 1,324 got enrolled in schools.
- Community Participation - Through initiatives of partnership, 3816 Local Voluntary Groups consisting of 1865 Mahila Mandals, 1259 Yuvak Mandals and 692 others, were successfully mobilised.

Contributed by Avabai B. Wadai, President , Family Planning Assocation of India.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTENANCE AND WOMEN

The gender dimensions of the environment and development debate have intensified during the last decade. In the 1972 Conference on the Environment in Stockholm, the then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, emphasised the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation as a major problem. She drew attention to the situation of women, the poorest of the poor, with less than 1% share in the productive resources of the world.

1.1 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 endorsed this point. The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies adopted in 1985 drew attention to the link between productivity of women and environment.

1.2 It said, "deprivation of traditional means of livelihood is most often a result of environmental degradation, resulting from such natural and man-made disasters as droughts, floods, hurricanes, erosions, desertification, deforestation and inappropriate land use. Such conditions have already pushed great numbers of poor women into marginal environments, where critically low levels of water supplies, shortages of fuel, over-utilisation of grazing and arable land, and population density have deprived them of their livelihoods. These women need options for alternative means of livelihood, improvement in home and work environments and enhanced capacity to manage their environment and sustain productive resources".

1.3 Women have brought a different perspective to the environment debate, because of their different experience base. Poor women's lives are not compartmentalised and they see the issues in a broad and holistic perspective. They understand clearly that economics and environment are compatible. Their experience reveals to them that soil, water and vegetation, necessary for their day to day living, requires care and good management. Environmental degradation is related not only to the biosphere alone, but to the social sphere as well.

2. The Planning Commission's Approach Paper (1990) on 'Environment and Forests in the Eighth Plan' stated that rural people's inequitable access to resources for survival and the movement of these resources from the rural, hill and forest areas to urban ones for luxury consumption was a major problem. Government needed to reverse this trend and provide for the legitimate needs and aspirations of a growing Indian population. Resource use had to be designed to conserve nature while meeting people's needs. Women and children, needed special access to and control over natural resources.

2.1. Environment related costs and benefits have to be balanced. This calls for development of a suitable methodology for quantifying them. India's preparations for the UNCED generated tremendous interest in environmental issues. India has always maintained and lobbied for an environmentally sound and sustainable quality of life, which is socially just and equitable.

3. The problems, challenges and issues are multi-faceted. Deforestation, land degradation, floods, droughts, pollution, slums and squatter settlements, burgeoning population, loss of biodiversity, and climatic change to name a few.

3.1 More than 70% of the Indian population is rural based. Biomass plays a crucial role in meeting daily survival needs of the vast majority of the rural households. Water is essential for survival and its availability is related to biomass. The biomass-based subsistence economy is mostly non-monetised. Production and processing of biomass agriculture, forestry, minor forest produce and village crafts based on biomass as raw material, are also the biggest sources of employment. Development imperatives have inevitably led to some destruction of the biomass through deforestation and environmental degradation. These affect the landless and the marginal farming families in the rural areas, tribals from denuded forest areas, pastoralists from over grazed lands, communities in coastal fishing areas and migrants in slums and squatter settlements.

3.2 Traditionally, women have been responsible for subsistence and survival economies and for water, food, fuel, fodder, and habitat. Within this, environmental destruction exacerbates women's problems in a way very different from that of men. The challenge is to re-establish the symbiosis between communities, women, and natural resources and reverse the trend of the negative impact of existing developmental paradigms.

3.3 Government programmes for the promotion of afforestation, wastelands development, fuel wood and fodder production, conservation of minor forest produce, and aerial seeding need to be strengthened. There is also a strong case for widening application of science, technology and good management techniques to improve the quality of the environment and women's lives, as is being currently attempted through CAPART (Council for Advancement of People's Action for Rural Technology), Department of Science and Technology, Non-Conventional Energy Sources and several non-Governmental Organisations. (See Box)

4. India has a total land mass of 330 million hectares. In the predominantly rain fed, drought prone and high population areas, there is a severe stress on natural resources. Tree cover has been considerably depleted, soil erosion damage has escalated, the water table has gone down and the severity of drought has increased the ecological deterioration of dry lands in the last few decades. Population growth, poverty, rising aspirations, and affluence of the middle class have exerted powerful pressures on the eco system. The erosion of traditional institutions for managing common property resources and the failure of new institutions to fill the vacuum have affected the denudation of natural resources.

5. The National Policy for Forests in 1952 was to have at least one third land under forest cover. At present, it is down to 19.47%. Wild life and bio-diversity conservation measures and laws have been introduced. Under the Government's Forest Policy, innovative projects in some areas surrounding forests, have shown that forests can be saved through people's, particularly women's, active involvement. This is primarily by creating 'social fences' or incentives for them to save and conserve forests, using indigenous knowledge and making them partners in an equitable and sustainable manner.

5.1 Consultations are also held with NGOs to ensure involvement of people in managing forests. Under the Joint Forest Management Scheme about 1.5 million hectares of land is being managed through 10,000 Village Protection Committees.

5.2 2 to 3 million people in the forest and tribal belts of India earn their livelihood by head loading. Of these, 90% are women. They walk long distances to sell loads of wood. Despite the harsh nature of the work many women have taken to it in the last two decades, as it is the only work available all the year round. Collection of minor forest produce and herbs have traditionally provided extra income, valuable nutrition, and medicinal support. Not being able to access this due to retreating forest cover has impoverished women without suitable alternatives. As women operate in a labour intensive and non-monetised economy, they have become victims of profiteers, middlemen and also the men in their families and communities.

6 Almost 6% of India's population, are pastoral and nomadic. Provision of fodder and taking care of livestock has traditionally been women's responsibility. With pasture lands being degraded, the condition of landless pastoral women is worsening. As cash cropping and use of synthetic inputs in agriculture increases, the synergistic ecological relationship between the nomadic grazers and farmers has shifted to one of sporadic conflict.

7 Water carrying is a strenuous activity, done by women and consumes a lot of time. Women spend long hours and go far to collect water for the family. Lack of drinking water affects adult women and children most acutely. Relatively few attempts have been made to combine irrigation and water supply

7.1 Surveys in rural areas to identify the status of drinking water supply and quality problems have been carried out by the Government during 1991-93. These have revealed that 10.69% of the habitations accounting for 5.26% of the rural population, do not have access to any safe public source of drinking water within the specified distance and elevation norms. For maximum scientific and technical inputs into rural water supply sector and to deal with quality problems of drinking water, a National Water Mission was launched in 1986. Training is given to women to enable them to play an active role in using and repairing hand-pumps for the supply of drinking water. They are also actively associated in selection of sites for hand pumps and other water sources (See Box).

8. Women's work in the hills and deserts is even harder. Agricultural produce and fuel is in short supply. Studies show that women spend a great amount of time searching for fuel and fodder. India has signed the International Convention to combat desertification and a national action programme is being prepared to combat desertification.

9. The concept of sanitation was once confined to disposal of human waste. Now, it is a comprehensive concept which includes liquid and solid waste disposal, food, hygiene domestic as well as environmental hygiene - and is receiving Government's attention. According to available estimates about 46.63% of the urban population and only 11% of the rural population has been provided with sanitation facilities so far. For women some exclusive sanitary facilities have been provided in selected rural areas- an essential step towards clean living and privacy.

10. India has a 6000-kilometre long coastline and a large number of rivers which support about 65 lakh fishing communities. In the fishing sector, women are involved in all processes, after the fish catch comes in. The main operations are fish vending, processing, drying, curing, loading and unloading and net making. Though women take the fish door to door, the market is primarily male dominated.

10.1 Inspite of a high annual growth rate, women face special difficulties in processing and marketing fish. This is because of the adverse impact of mechanisation. It is men who get loans for deep sea trawlers. The same is true with the inland fishery sector where contracts to fishermen's societies and fishermen's development agencies displace women from their traditional rights. Fishing contracts in ponds and tanks in small towns and villages, also affect the common resource base of poor women. Water scarcity and drying up of breeding grounds of fish sometimes affects their livelihood. Pollution in rivers and seas kills large shoals, compounding this problem.

11. By the year 2000, the majority of the world's population will be living in cities. The Eighth Plan Document acknowledges the present disparities in urban share of infrastructure and facilities between the rich and the poor.

11.1 In rural to urban migration, men far outnumber women. However, more women are beginning to migrate to the cities, sometimes with their families and sometimes alone. They work as commercial sex workers or as domestic help in homes. Women construction workers are a common sight. Illegal factories and manufacturing units, not directly covered by labour laws, also accommodate a sizeable proportion of migrant poor women, who are paid on an average two thirds or three fourths of what men would be paid.

11.2 This often means that women may not to able to extricate themselves from the vicious circle of illegal squatter settlements, pavement dwellings and slums. In a sense, the economic and social strait jackets into which they find themselves squeezed, perpetuate their poverty by institutionalising it.

11.3 Urban environmental issues are complex and relate to habitat, sanitation, work place for home based workers, training for urban productive skills, and preservation of the environment. All this needs coordination on a large scale as - such as the Government's programme of Urban Basic Services (UBS) and several slum improvement programmes of the Government and non-Governmental Organisations.

11.4 As in the forest and rural areas, the provision of food, fuel and drinking water is seen as the women's responsibility. In a hostile and difficult situation, women struggle to nurture and create the physical and psychological space for meeting family needs, and also create the community's survival system based on mutual support.

11.5 Here, shortages of basic necessities affects a woman and her family's conditions adversely. For example, bad coal ash, mixed with mud and turned into fuel briquettes is usually the main fuel. At times, the women have to use non-fuels like rubber tyres — in the absence of traditional fuels — which give off toxic fumes. Cooking, cleaning, living without basic sanitary facilities in poorly ventilated shelters, they become easy prey to diseases. Women and girls are the worst sufferers because of malnourishment and lack of medical facilities.

12. The current debate suggests some strategies for tackling issues relating to environment and development. They are as follows :

- Having productive resources in common with women's rights, safe-guarded by equitable sharing of benefits.
- Working with women as partners, recognising their wealth of indigenous knowledge, experience and the significant role they play in environmental conservation and management.
- Developing alternative livelihood patterns in order to relieve persistent ecological pressures.
- Considering women's perspectives on problems of environmental destruction and inequitable access to necessary survival resources, by developing policies and action plans for bio-geographic regions in tune with local needs of different agro-climatic zones.
- Drawing on the potential of science and technology to solve environment related problems and ease women's work inside and outside the home.
- Focussing gender issues in policies related to habitat and housing, both in rural and urban areas.
- Expanding non-formal environmental education and awareness campaigns, such as the ones conducted through "Paryavaran Vahinis", with a specific gender orientation.

12.1 Many of the above strategies are already in position. What is now required is a gender sensitivity to be woven through them in an integrated manner. It is acknowledged that women's link with the environmental sustenance is vital and that it is imperative to pay immediate attention to it.

Based on contributions received from the Core Group headed by Dr. Hemlata Swarup.

WOMEN AND WATER

Drinking water was an issue which came up in almost every meeting of women's groups in Banda District of Uttar Pradesh. The shortage of sources of potable water, the difficulties faced in getting broken handpumps repaired, and the time spent each day in carrying water were identified by the women as their main problems.

Government functionaries felt that the main reason for the failure of water supply was the fact that local communities were not involved in planning, site selection or maintenance of handpumps. Providing and maintaining water supply facilities was seen as the Government's responsibility. Communities did not feel a sense of ownership of, or responsibility for, the village handpump, which was, more often than not, in disrepair.

Mahila Samakhya, a Government sponsored women's empowerment programme, took the responsibility of conducting an initial survey and mapping the water resources of the District. The survey was the basis for further planning by the Jal Nigam, the concerned Government department. Next, a study of 69 handpumps was taken up, where the women observed them over a 6-month period and kept records of the kind of repairs required.

A team of 17 women participated in a 10-day training course to learn to repair broken handpumps. Initially, the Jal Nigam trainers — all men — were sceptical. They felt the women would be better off sticking to cooking and cleaning. The women were apprehensive too, but at the end of the training both trainers and learners felt very differently. A large number of handpumps, which had been lying unrepaired for months, had been repaired by the women, proving that the job was well within their capacity.

Today, the trainees batch are acknowledged as experts by the fitters as well as by their own communities. They have become trainers themselves. The impact on water availability is striking. Handpumps rarely stay out of order for more than a few days. Attitudes have also changed. Until the women took over, villagers would not come forward to help the maintenance teams in their work. Now many villages have water committees which look after the handpump and keep its surroundings clean.

Suggestions that men make better mechanics than the women, are countered by the women with the argument that those who use the pumps most are best qualified to look after them. Songs made up by the groups show the same confidence and spirit. Many include couplets warning men not to meddle with the pumps!

The women put in hours of strenuous labour and travel long distance in the Jal Nigam trucks with the fitters, ignoring snide remarks about the morals of women who move about with men.

Mahila Samakhya is planning to set up a cooperative of women mechanics.

Contributed by the Department of Education, Government of India, Delhi

NON CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES

For over a decade now, the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) has been a nodal agency of the Government of India for implementation of the National Programme on Improved Chulha (NPIC) and also more recently the National Programme on Biogas Development (NPBD).

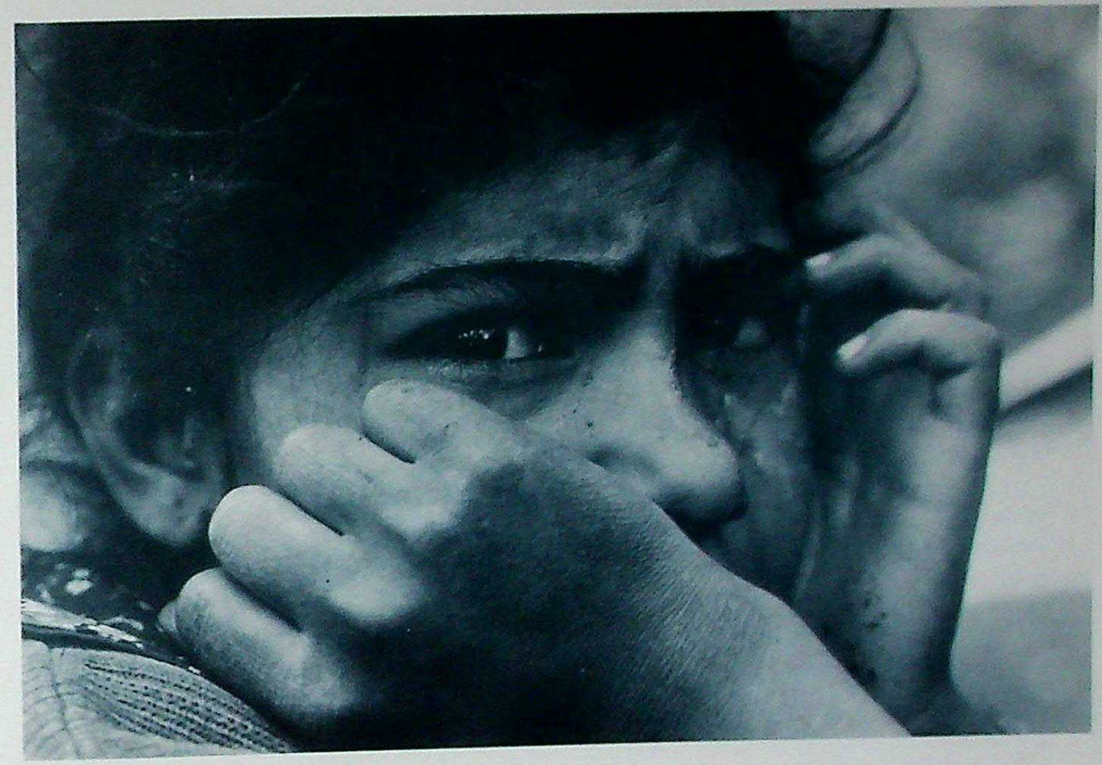
Through its branches all over India and other small NGOs, AIWC has taken appropriate technology to remote villages. For instance, through AIWC's Guntur Branch, thousands of improved wood-stoves have been built in villages of the Srisailam Project Tiger area in Andhra Pradesh. This has helped tribal women earn an income, apart from having a cleaner environment.

The NPIC has proved to be a major programme for the development of women, wherever they have been trained properly. Because of the improved wood-stoves, fuel consumption has fallen drastically. Women spend less time collecting fuel-wood and cleaning soot-laden vessels and black walls. Reduction of smoke thanks to building of better chimneys improves women's health by saving them from the hazards of smoke-related diseases like bronchitis, asthma and eye ailments.

Village women are trained by experts to make and maintain wood-stoves . These entrepreneurial women earn reasonable sums of money, which they control, resulting in an improved self-image and status in the community.

In Quilon, Kerala, the AIWC trained women to make a living by building wood-stoves. Their unemployed husbands gave up drinking and gambling, in order to help their wives procure orders. Such was the empowerment!

Contributed by the All India Women's Conference, Delhi.



COUNTERING THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women should be viewed as one of the most crucial social mechanisms by which they are forced into a subordinate position. It is a manifestation of unequal power relations, which has led to men's domination over and discrimination against women. Thus, violence against women, throughout their life, comes to be socially sanctified.

1.1 While the basic reason for violence against women is their inferior status in a male-dominated society - educationally, economically, politically and socially-there are other factors responsible, too. The increasing criminalisation of society, media images of violence, inadequate means to address the cause and consequences of violence, poor enforcement of legal provisions, unabashed consumerism and erosion of traditional values have all added to it.

1.2 However, over the past decade, there has been a growing awareness of this disturbing phenomenon and its long-term impact on the development and empowerment of women. The media furnishes statistics and reports on dowry deaths, rape, molestation, incest, assault etc. data which was virtually unavailable till a few years ago. According to statistics, crimes against women are rising at a very fast rate.

1.3 Registration of crimes has also increased significantly. Greater awareness of legal provisions of women's rights and a determined effort on the part of women themselves and the community to break the culture of silence surrounding atrocities against women has led to this recent development.

1.4 Interestingly, in the 1974 landmark Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, there was no chapter on violence. Nor had it been a major item on the agenda of any of the decennial UN World Conferences on Women. It is only from the late 80s that writing, research and action on violence against women have become a component in debates and discourses world-wide.

2 Violence is defined as a physical act of aggression of one individual or group against another or others. Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering. This also includes threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, in public or private life and violation of human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts.

2.1 There are the more latent and unquantifiable aspects of aggression or invasion of the self by outside agents, namely emotional violence and other forms of cruelty which ends up in suicide, self-mutilation, negligence of ailments, sex-determination tests and denial of food.

2.2 The problem, therefore, has to be studied, in relation to the family, society, political situation, work place, sexual violence, trafficking of women etc. This is important because a restricted perspective influences the collection of data as well as analysis of trends and provides an incomplete picture of the phenomenon of aggressive behaviour.

2.3 The world over, official data deals with crime per se rather than the more pervasive phenomena of violence in its different facets. One reason for this could be that police data on crime is based on complaints and cases registered which in turn depend on

- willingness to report
- police sensitivity to act on crimes against women as well as its inclination to investigate.

2.4 Thus these crime figures may merely be the proverbial tip of the iceberg.

3. Acts or threats of violence instil fear and insecurity in women and hamper their striving for equality, development and peace. The social, health and economic costs to the individual and society as a result of such violence could be prohibitive.

4. The family, and its operational unit, the household, is the setting for much of the discrimination against women and girl children. In many cases, such violence is tolerated and it goes unreported. Within the home, individuals are conditioned to set expectations, roles and obligations. Quite often the processes are neither gender or age-sensitive. The girl child gets the worst of it - physical, emotional and sexual assault. An extreme manifestation of it is female foeticide or infanticide.

4.1 Marriage is universally regarded as essential for a girl, irrespective of class, caste, religion and ethnicity. Control of her sexuality is of primary importance. Subsequent expectations and relationships impose considerable burden on the girls. The natal home rarely reinforces a girl's sense of well-being and confidence. Marriage, then, often appears as a welcome release from one form of bondage. What is not realised, of course, is that other oppressive structures soon replace it.

4.2 Since many brides are barely out of their teens, it is not difficult to imagine their problems of adjustment to a totally new environment. For, in India, marriage establishes a network of interacting individuals and is rarely a highly personal relationship between a man and a woman. Thus, wife abuse, a practice shared with many other cultures, acquires a different hue.

4.3 The term 'abuse' includes physical as well as non-physical acts. There is enough evidence to suggest that it often receives wider familial sanction. It is institutionalised in various forms, ranging from long hours of labour, often within and outside the home, denial of food, neglect of ailments and verbal abuse to physical violence by the husband and sometimes other family members. Far more difficult to acknowledge are problems caused by the narrow definition of sexuality as a means of perpetuating control over their minds and bodies in a conjugal relationship.

4.4 The growing incidence of marital violence and child abuse worldwide, the regional variations notwithstanding, indicates that men are getting more aggressive towards those who are physically weaker and dependent on them. The sexual division of labour within the household, overall control of and access to property, their greater physical mobility and visibility - all point to the unequal male-focussed marital and parental relationships. Efforts are needed to ensure that gender discrimination is confronted where it is least visible, and perhaps most insidious in its reach and impact. This is all the more important if the Indian family is to be a truly democratic structure and shed its hierarchical arrangement of domination and subordination, control and subservience.

4.5 There is sometimes a tendency, in India, to club all marital violence under the overall heads of 'dowry', 'dowry deaths' and 'dowry violence'. This glosses over the other causes of violence. No doubt, the fact that the abhorrent practice of dowry has not been rooted out is a matter of grave concern. Its heinous nature mocks at all norms of dignity and equity.

4.6 Not much attention has been paid to broader ramifications of the problem of domestic violence such as the ill-treatment and neglect of the elderly - many of whom have lost their spouses. These need to be looked into with sympathy and concern.

5. A far greater awareness is also needed to view the workplace - the field, factory or office - as possessing the potential of being a violent, if not degrading, setting for women. The mild term 'eve-teasing' needs to be replaced by a specific clause on sexual harassment. Interestingly, though a large percentage of Indian women work either for a wage or otherwise, articulation of sexual harassment had been muted till recently for obvious reasons, mainly socio-cultural compulsion. However, the Government has taken the lead and is considering ways to address it.

6. It is still not a part of accepted 'feminine'

behaviour to speak of aggression against a woman or girl, either in public or within the family. At the same time, there is enough evidence to prove that sexual harassment is a subject on which women across all class and age groups can be readily mobilized. Rape is the most violent, abrupt and physically painful instance of male aggression. At the physical level, it represents an invasion on person; at the psychological, it results often enough in deep trauma, shame and guilt.

7. Violence and its perpetuation are often related to conflicts of caste, class, ethnicity, communalism, fundamentalism and terrorism. And these cumulatively have a negative impact on women. Other forms of violence are trafficking in women and girls and custodial violence perpetrated by law enforcement agencies. These have been fairly well documented and published. A consensus on action to be taken is emerging, as a result of the demonstrated commitment of women to peace and its maintenance and the need to secure their basic rights and dignity.

7.1 To illustrate, in recent years, the phenomenon of terrorism, aided and abetted from across the border, has surfaced in certain parts of India, particularly Jammu and Kashmir. The arbitrary and large-scale incidents of rape, intimidation and other forms of violence against women by terrorist groups in these areas has led to a sizeable number of families of different communities, fleeing their homes.

7.2 Violence is reprehensible in all contexts. However, there are safeguards against such abuse and channels of redressal as well as strict punishment for its perpetrators. Terrorist groups, on the other hand, create a stifling environment of intimidation which silences the victim and as a result there is considerable difficulty in bringing the culprits to book.

7.3 The international community has recognised and articulated its condemnation of terrorism as a grave violation of human rights. This is reflected in the Vienna Declaration and the Resolutions adopted by the UNGA and UNCHR. It is necessary that the international community also takes cognisance of such violence against women, which is a significant dimension of terrorism. This should be addressed effectively, by appropriate measures to be adopted by the international community.

8. Violence, in its different dimensions, has to be viewed in the context of criminality which is on the upswing in most societies. What is not obvious is whether the perception of such trends is also increasing. It would be not be out of place to state that often women victims are not sufficiently aware of its implications, either to themselves or to the aggressor, in order to articulate them. This is particularly so in case of psychological oppression. Here neither those affected, nor those responsible, view the behaviour as aggression.

8.1 At another level, the fact that the police as well as victims are often reluctant to register cases means that these are not always viewed as invasive and objectionable. These factors of socialisation need to be viewed in the proper perspective, so that inadvertently the protectors are not absolved and the victims blamed.

8.2 While silence, and of course, shame, continues to shroud much of what happens within the four walls of a home, women have now been helped to come out and share their pain. At the collective level, their mobilisation has facilitated a dialogue on how the growing problem of violence against them can be faced. Public hearings have been conducted and the response is fairly encouraging.

9. Mechanisms of change are being introduced as a result of enhanced consciousness about the trend of increasing violence against girls and women, as well as its unfortunate consequences. Important legislative reforms, innovations in the structure of the police force, official measures to sensitize the bureaucracy, media campaigns as well as prompt enforcement action have led to a hitherto totally

taboo subject securing public attention. Some of these measures have been fairly successful and innovative as well.

9.1 In the present context two significant amendments to the Indian Penal Code are relevant. Firstly, Section 304B defines dowry deaths as being one where a woman dies of burns or other injuries within seven years of her marriage and there is evidence of cruelty and harassment by the husband or any relative of her husband, "for or in connection with any demand for dowry". Secondly, that harassment in itself can be cause for considerable agony, anguish and trauma for married women was taken cognizance of in Section 498A which extended a prison sentence to a husband or relative accused of 'cruelty'.

9.2 The definition of 'cruelty' makes a distinction between conduct which may cause a woman to commit suicide or 'cause grave injuries or danger of life, limb or health', whether mental or physical of the woman and harassment related to property demands. The graph of cases registered under these new Sections, has been steadily spiralling upwards.

9.3 Important amendments in the IPC on custodial death and shifting the onus of proof of rape from the victim to the accused have also gone a long way in bringing the guilty to book and attesting the commitment of the State to take a very serious view of violations of women's rights. In addition, Sections 174 and 176 of the Criminal Procedure Code have been amended to provide for investigation by the police in cases of the death of a woman under suspicious circumstances. The Indian Evidence Act, too, has new Sections i.e. 113A and 113B, 'permitting presumption by the Court about the abetment of suicide and dowry deaths of a woman, if cruelty or harassment for dowry is proved'. The Family Courts Act, 1984, was another initiative to check increasing domestic violence.

9.4 Special police Cells and all-women police Stations to deal with acts of aggression against women have been established in 12 States and Union Territories. The induction of women into the police force at different levels has also increased substantially. Close monitoring of cases of violence against women has been initiated on the basis of a consensus arrived at a national level Government sponsored Consultation recently.

9.5 An assessment of the Cell in Delhi, indicates that this specialised function of the police does indeed fulfil a genuine need. Cutting across socio-economic categories, women approach it with a variety of problems, expecting anything from the initiation of a case, to recalcitrant spouses being delivered a strict admonition by a person in uniform. The involvement of a number of women's organisations as volunteer counsellors at police Stations, has helped in building bridges between the citizens and the police force. They have also been associated in facilitating the registration and investigation of cases of crimes against women. Short Stay Homes and Family Counselling Centres have also been set up.

10. Both Government and Non-Governmental Organisations have launched mass based campaigns to impart para-legal training on the rights of women and these are expected to go a long way in enabling them to access their entitlement in a systematic way.

11. The process of suggesting further amendments in law and administrative structures to ensure gender equality and justice is also an on-going one, focussing on themes related to redefinition of crimes like rape, molestation and eve-teasing, introduction of concepts of aggravated sexual assault, creation of a congenial atmosphere during judicial proceedings, incorporation of principles of gender equality in all laws etc. These are receiving attention and it is hoped that soon the legal framework will be truly gender sensitive and effective.

12. Certain sections of the law enforcement machinery are also being given gender sensitization training by experts, Institutions and Agencies in the last few years. Their success depends on how imagi-

natively these are designed. With the experience of running these modules, it has been realized that one-time inputs, primarily data based, are inadequate, when faced with generations of socialization of disparate and unequal roles and obligations and the control dominated mindset of the trainees. Therefore, after in-depth consideration of the complex issue, Government has now decided to make gender-sensitive inputs an integral part of the curriculum of all training programmes in the National Police Academy and Regional and State Police Training Institutions. Such efforts directed at the judiciary are now being planned.

12.1 These programmes have to be combined with a near-complete overhaul of attitudes and expectations. This may sound unrealistic, but this is essential. What is needed is a holistic approach to the issue.

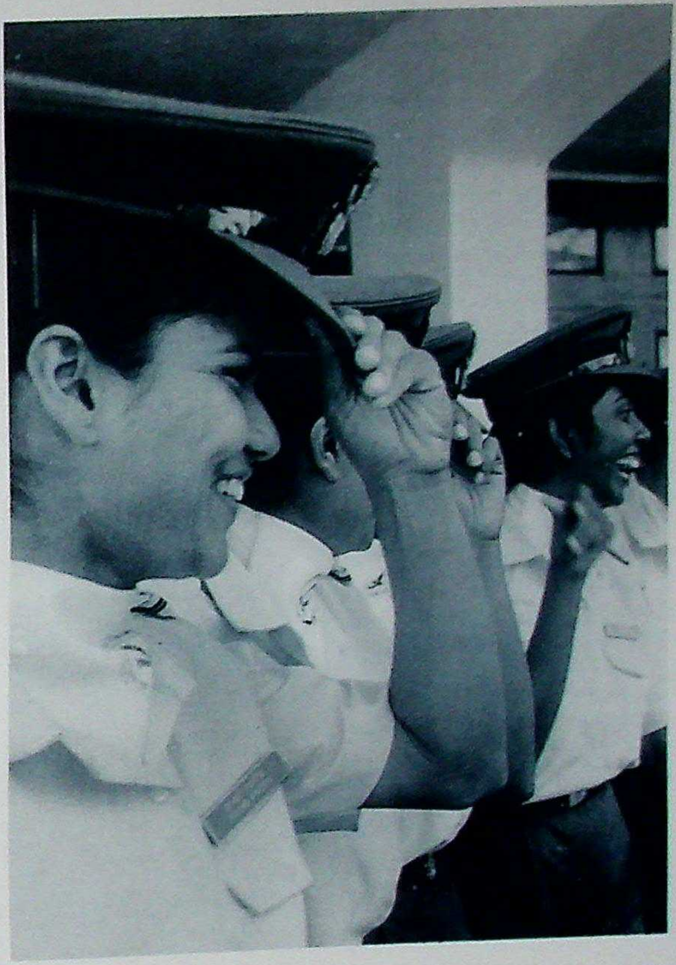
12.2 Given that changing attitudes is a near-herculean task, it is important to keep up the momentum for improving the overall status of women as well as providing incentives.

13. Government and articulate segments of society have all been moving continuously for change and positive action in cases of violence against women. The National Commission for Women and the Human Rights Commission, set up by the Government, have been addressing this matter. Such Commissions are being set up at the State level and are working closely with many voluntary organisations and activist groups.

14. It is being realised that violation of women's rights can only push half of humanity into further depths of degradation, making the goal of a humane social order more distant. Confronting the ideology of patriarchy and removing the fetters of inequality are not only moral imperatives. Without these, women's development and empowerment will remain empty promises.

15. As a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), India is deeply committed to these lofty objectives.

Based on contributions received from Dr. Malavika Karlekar and publications of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India.



ACCESSING OF LEGAL ENTITLEMENTS BY WOMEN

Securing gender equity has been of primary importance to the Government as borne out by Constitutional and related legislative provisions in this regard. (*Details may be seen in Chapter 4*).

1.1 The struggle for legal equality has also been one of the major concerns of the women's movement in the country. In parental and matrimonial homes, for acquiring education, skills and in professions, legal rights are critical for women.

1.2 The first phase of the movement for women's rights centred around three major problems they faced : child marriages, enforced widowhood and property rights.

1.3 The second movement was linked to the freedom struggle and the debate that followed the Indian Constitution. It focussed on the Hindu Code Bill and emphasised that women were not being accepted as equals of men. Discrimination could only be effectively reduced, if not eliminated, by passing appropriate laws and evolving an effective machinery to implement these laws.

1.4 The latest phase began in the seventies and has been highlighting the gender bias in the laws, making society aware of the oppression women experience within their homes and outside. This has resulted in several important legal amendments as well as introduction of fresh legislative measures.

2 The right to equality is a fundamental one. However, the institutional forces arraigned against it are equally powerful collectives that exert control over peoples' minds. Factors like caste, class, community, religion, locality, family occupation are all brought in. These controls affect women and men alike, making them accept gender inequality per se. This unconscious bias sometimes prevails even among persons open to progressive, secular and egalitarian ideologies.

3 Personal laws, like Hindu personal law, were overhauled to give women greater rights regarding inheritance, adoption and divorce. Monogamy has also been made mandatory. However, personal laws of most other communities have generally remained untouched on the ground that the demand for such change must come from within, before the State intervenes.

3.1 One approach could be to undertake the codification of different personal laws and to monitor the experience of the operation of these codes. A new jurisprudence may evolve out of mutual interaction which could perhaps form the basis for a uniform civil code. A recent view of women's organisations, is that gender equality in laws rather than a uniform civil code could be pursued as a desired objective.

4 To ensure that these legal safeguards actually reach women, Government enacted the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. It has set up a legal unit and expert Committees to examine the existing laws which have a direct bearing on women's rights, to scrutinise the justice delivery system vis-a-vis women and to suggest new legislation to improve their status. (*Details may be seen in Box in Chapter 5*).

5 The Women's Bureau, too, has undertaken a detailed review of the following Acts, in consultation with experts:

- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prevention) Act, 1986

5.1 Several parallel and independent efforts are also in progress to gender-appraise existing laws relating to land, tenancy and property, sexual harassment at the work place, labour laws, in the light of new macro economic policies etc.

5.2 The results of these would be valuable for reformulation and recodification as they seek to extend the boundaries of law and justice and may lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of women's rights. They may also serve to enhance legal and professional commitment to these rights. Such exercises will make space for and acknowledge all the related dimensions of women's rights.

6. If we concede that rights are islands of empowerment, then any denial or lack of it means disempowerment. Almost every campaign against violence on women in the 1980s resulted in a new legislation providing protection to them. Each enactment resulted in stringent punishment, provided guidelines for better implementation, set time limits for deciding cases and extended compensation to the victims.

6.1 The amendment of the rape laws in 1983 was the result of such a sustained campaign against the provisions of Indian Penal Code following the Supreme Court verdict in the Mathura rape case. It was significant, being the first response of the Government to the women's movement and establishing the notion of custodial rape as a new concept in jurisprudence. "Power rape" also came to be accepted as an issue to be resisted by civil rights movements.

7. The condition of the workers in the unorganised sector is a matter of great concern. Despite India having ratified International Conventions as are embodied by ILO and having laws such as the Minimum Wages Act, the Contract Labour Act, the Equal Remuneration Act etc., poor implementation and enforcement has often prevented women from benefitting from these legal safeguards.

7.1 At a Public Enquiry on "Women in the Unorganised Sector" conducted by the National Commission for Women in 1994, the legal bench realised the need for new mechanisms to overcome these barriers. In the case of construction workers, the Bench recommended the setting up of a Tripartite Construction Labour Board, consisting of representatives of Government, employers and workers to ensure the enforcement of these laws.

8 Global recognition to protect women's rights came with the adoption of a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the UN General Assembly. The Convention is the only legally binding international instrument dealing with the rights of women, though States have the right to incorporate any law or all the 30 Articles of the Convention in keeping with their culture and practice.

8.1 On June 25, 1993, India ratified CEDAW with a declaration in respect of Article 16 (1 and 2) and a reservation in respect of Article 29 (1). These pertain to India's policy of non-interference in the personal affairs of any community without its initiative and consent, difficulty in registration of marriages and non-binding by compulsory arbitration or adjudication by the International Court of Justice.

9 The vast mass of women, obviously, are too poorly positioned to secure full benefits under the Constitution and other legal provisions, national or international. Even as laws were being enacted it was becoming clear that these alone would not improve their lot. Insufficiency of legal aid, apparent insensitivity of the judiciary, procedural lacunae and delays, lack of basic knowledge about the law and procedures as well as absence of alternative systems of justice have all contributed to this. Long drawn-out trials and the low rate of conviction under existing laws have been deterrents, too.

9.1 The need to secure equal access to legal services regardless of financial capacity or gender has exercised the Government for a long time. Several analyses and reports of the Law Commission make this clear. The importance of legal literacy has also been emphasised in the evaluation of the Total Literacy Campaign taken up by the Expert Group.

9.2 Legal aid was started in 1970 and a Commission for implementing legal aid services was set up in 1979, along with legal aid structures at the State and District level all over the country. The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, created structures for aid to specific categories entitled to free legal aid, including women.

9.3 The Family Courts Act, 1984, was meant to expedite cases as well as to do away with cumbersome legal procedures. Lok Adalat or People's Court that dispense speedy and cheap justice, have worked well. Experience of legal aid, however, varies from State to State.

9.4 India also has a strong tradition of Public Interest Litigation (PIL). According to the Supreme Court explanation, "where legal wrong or legal injury is caused to a person or to a determinate class of persons by reason of violation of any Constitutional or legal right or any burden is imposed in contravention of any Constitutional or legal provision or when legal injury or legal burden is threatened and such person or determinate class or persons is by reason of poverty, disability or socially or economically disadvantaged position, unable to approach the Court for any relief, any member of the public can maintain an application for an appropriate direction, order or writ". This has resulted in a new investigative thrust for the Courts and has led to increased executive accountability.

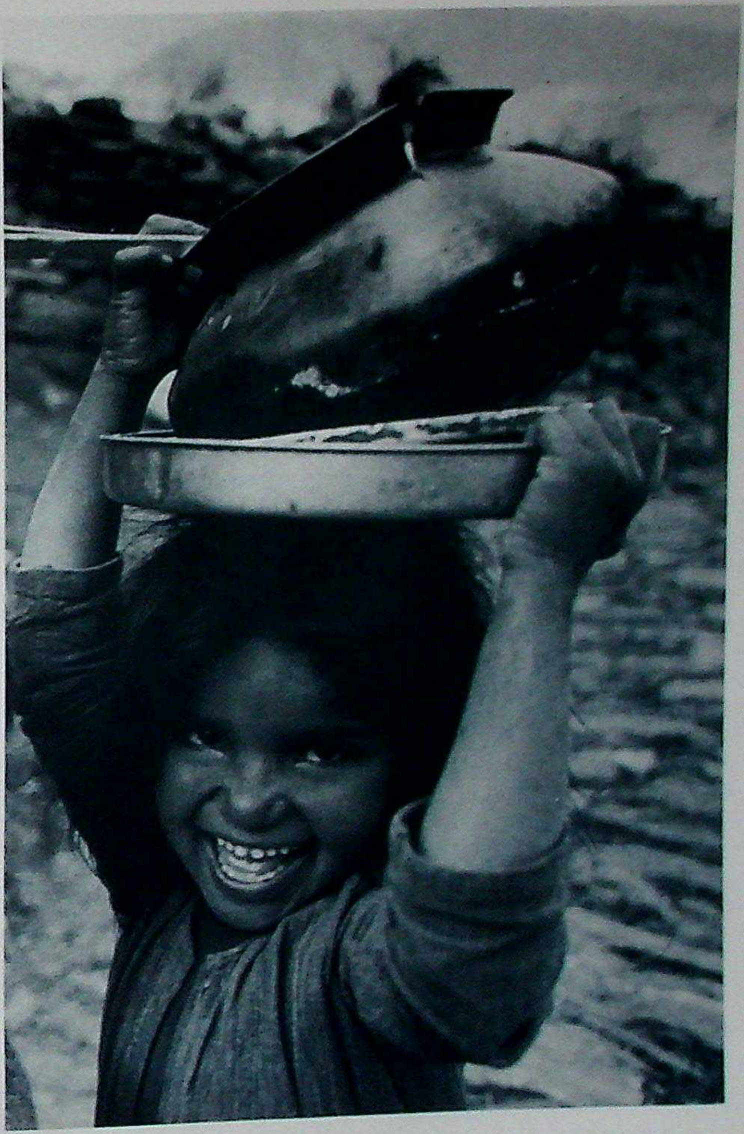
10 Legal literacy or para-legal training, is of paramount importance. The Government, as well as non-Governmental Organisations, have prepared and disseminated material on legal-literacy on a large scale in the last few years. One leading example is the set of 10 booklets, entitled 'Our Laws', published by the Department of Women and Child Development, highlighting salient features of the rights available to women.

10.1 Legal literacy is imparted through several strategies: awareness programmes, training-cum-orientation modules, literature dissemination, sensitization workshops and multi-media campaigns involving films, plays, songs, posters and issue-based discussions. Follow-up programmes ,have invariably been built into the structure and design of these programmes. They have consequently been very impactful. These efforts are now being taken up on a larger scale. The Government is working on a National Dissemination Plan and the State Governments are formulating State level Dissemination Plans through existing Agencies/Institutions.

10.2 It is envisaged that legal information will be woven into the curricula of training for various grassroots functionaries, like village Health Workers, Anganwadi Workers, School Teachers, Land Record Keepers, Police and Forest Staff as well as the Panchayat members, both men and women. Moreover, school and even college texts would contain legal information. For text books to serve a real purpose clearly the level of literacy will have to rise radically.

10.3 Paralegal training programmes would also be extended to non-Governmental Organisations working for women and community members, including women. It may perhaps be taken up eventually, as a truly mass-based programme like the extremely successful 'Total Literacy Campaign' which has made many districts of the country functionally literate. Women would also be provided organisational assistance to act upon the information they receive by way of establishing local networks and accessing related support mechanisms. This has, in fact, been identified as top priority action.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Dr. Padma Seth. Further inputs provided by Dr. Vina Mazumdar.



THE GIRL CHILD AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

The population of India is young, with nearly 37 percent consisting of children below 15; thus, two out of every five persons are below 15 years. Early childhood is an important and delicate period in an individual's growth and developmental deficiencies during this stage lead to permanent retardation in physical and mental growth.

2 Much before the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, the Indian Constitution provided a frame work within which provisions were available for protection, development and welfare of children. Article 24 prohibits the employment of children in any factory or mine or in any other hazardous occupation. Article 39 (E) and (F) lays down that the State shall direct its policy in such a manner that the tender age of children is not abused and children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and childhood is protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment. Education of children has been recognised as the sine que non for growth of children. There is a wide range of laws, including the Juvenile Justice Act, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, the Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, which guarantee, to a substantial extent the rights and entitlements of children. In 1974, the Government of India adopted a National Policy for Children declaring the nation's children as "supremely important assets". This policy lays down that the State shall provide adequate services to all children both before and after birth and during the growing stages for their full physical, mental and social development.

3. Despite all the above provisions, the girl-child in India has as yet not been given an equal status and needs to be seen as a special group suffering from several disadvantages. The girl-child experiences discrimination throughout her life and the existing socio-cultural practices make it difficult for her to overcome the handicaps posed by her unequal status.

4 A life cycle approach may be taken to examine the situation of girls in India from conception and birth, through early childhood into the school going years, adolescence and womanhood. A very strong gender bias is entrenched in the cultural heritage of Indian society. It is a society that idolizes sons, an obsession that cuts across all differences. Sons are considered ritually and economically desirable, essential not only to light the funeral pyres of their parents in order to release their souls from the bondage of their bodies, but also to ensure continuation of the lineage and family name. They are also to become the economic support of parents in their old age.

5 From the day of her birth, a girl is thus viewed as more of a burden and a liability and is likely to be given a meager share of the family's affection and resources. This is because investments made for her brings no return; instead when she gets married, a sizeable dowry has to be given to her, draining the family resources. Girls are thus socialized from the very beginning to accept their situation and the ideology of male supremacy which makes them prey to a whole range of discriminatory practices. Family structures and social values function in such a way that girls grow up looking upon themselves as inferior and subservient, entitled to much less of everything than sons —less opportunity, less authority, less property, less status, less power and virtually no choices. The duality of values that operates in the patriarchal family is internalized at an early age, as a natural inevitable part of life. She acquires qualities of submissiveness, weakness and self sacrifice. The socialization process reinforces these stereotypes at all levels in the society, building her into a prisoner of her gender unable to retaliate against implicit and explicit injustice. In fact she often espouses and propagates cultural values which militate against the interests of the female gender. Customs, rituals, traditional practices frequently make a girl the "lesser child" who is denied optimal opportunities and means required for growth and

development during various stages of childhood. The burden of poverty further exacerbates her problems.

6. In the absence of gender specific data, it is difficult to describe the exact situation of the girl child. Except for a few aspects where disaggregated data for male and female sex is available, in most cases children continue to be described only as a category of population. However, in view of the emphasis on having such information, Government Departments and official statistics have increasingly started enumerating gender specific information in recent years.

7. Approximately one quarter of India's population comprises girls up to the age of 19 years. Within the backdrop of the declining sex-ratio for women, it is noteworthy that every year about 15 million girls are born in India and despite being biologically stronger then boys, almost one quarter of this number does not see their 15th birthday. In this connection, problems of female foeticide and female infanticide are causing concern to Government and other development activists. Age specific death rates indicate that upto the age of 35 years more females than males die at every age level. Malnutrition in young girls triggers a vicious cycle of undernutrition which spans into adulthood and passes on to the next generation. It leads to "women wastages". Maternal mortality rate in India is unacceptably high. It is common to provide lower and inferior diet to the female child. Coupled with it is the lack of care given to her, ignoring special nutritional needs during adolescence that may render her vulnerable to complications and mortality during pregnancy and child-birth. Girls thus fail to reach their full growth potential, get married early, run considerable risk of obstetric complications and give birth to low weight babies perpetuating the vicious circle. Sex bias in health care has been indicated in several micro level studies of hospital records.

8. However, recent projections paint a somewhat more favourable picture. There has been a narrowing of gap between female and male infant mortality rates in the early 90s. While the figures may disguise some under-reporting of female births and deaths, they hold out some hope for the female child. Notwithstanding the fact the social and cultural milieu of India has long favoured universality of marriage for women, the proportion of married women in the younger age groups of 10-14 and 15-19 have decreased steadily since 1961. Among girls in the age group 10-14, 22% in the rural areas and 6.8% in the urban areas were married in 1961. By 1981 these percentages had fallen to 7.7 and 2.4 respectively. Similarly, the proportion of married women in the age group 15-19, which was as high as 73.7% in the rural areas and 51.6% in the urban areas in 1961, had fallen to 48.8% and 28.1% respectively in 1981. However, problems of child marriage in some areas such as Rajasthan are cause for concern.

9. To fulfill the Constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory education, supportive infrastructure facilities have been expanded considerably in the country (*Details may be seen in Chapter 10*).

9.1 The main reasons for girls' non-enrolment in school or premature discontinuation of education are as follows:

- Lack of equal access to educational opportunities and supportive infrastructural facilities.
- Early assumption of domestic responsibilities in order to release the mother for productive activity.
- Conservative cultural values and fears for security which dictate the withdrawl of girls from educational institutions once they attain puberty.
- Early marriage which puts an end to education.

- Demand for dowry because of which money is not spent on education of the girl child.
- Unwillingness of parents to send daughters to co-educational schools where there are no female teachers or to schools which are at a distance requiring that girls be escorted there.
- Belief of parents that education is of little value to a girl whose life will be devoted to caring for the family.
- Perceptions that curriculum of educational institutions do not enhance the productive capabilities of girl children and adolescent girls.

9.2 These problems notwithstanding, it needs to be reiterated that apart from all the benefits of education that it provides, the school as an institution can play a significant role in challenging those cultural values that deprecate girls. Exposure to a counter-culture that engenders self-esteem, confidence and decision-making skills can have far reaching implications for the future generations.This effectively underscores the importance of mainstreaming girl-children in all programmes related to the spread of education.

10. A large number of girls work for long hours both at home and outside the home but their labour is unacknowledged or at best under reported in labour statistics. The involvement of young children in household work and family occupations is an important part of their socialization. Girls begin to participate in domestic work earlier than boys. They assist in collecting fire wood, fetching drinking water, looking after younger siblings, weeding, collecting fodder or fuel, food processing, poultry-keeping and so on, as early as the age of 9 or 10. On the other hand, boys are more likely to be sent to carry goods, to make purchases or sales in the market, and to be involved in agricultural operations such as ploughing, digging, threshing, harvesting or tool-related activities. By the age of 10-12 years, girls may be involved upto 10 hours of work (productive and housework) per day.

10.1 The work of girls is usually 'invisible' because it is located in the domestic sphere and, as a rule, household tasks defy quantification and monetary valuation. In rural areas, girls predominantly belonging to families with little or no land or other resources are likely to be withdrawn from school or not sent to school in order to assist the family in domestic chores or home based industry. Their urban counterparts live in slums and work in a variety of low-wage and low-status occupations and casual work mostly in the unorganised sector.

10.2 In Tamil Nadu, of the 45,000 working children in the match industry, approximately 90% are girls below the age of 14 years. Girls are found in large numbers in the coir industry of Kerala and in home-based industries like incense-making and "papad" (savoury preparation). Girls are involved in substantial numbers in the "beedi" (cigarette) industry, gem polishing industry of Jaipur, making of paper bags and garments, cotton-pod shelling, ground nut-pod shelling, hand embroidery, grain cleaning, block-making, sub-assembling electrical and electronic items. The basic premise of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 is that there must be an identifiable employer and an identifiable employee. Because they do not work in factories or workshops, girl workers are more often than not beyond the reach of law and their numbers remain under estimated.

10.3 The above estimates refer to children mainly engaged in wage labour and this figure is likely to go up with time. Of children who work as domestic workers, non-domestic workers paid in kind, and children engaged in marginal economic activities, there are no reliable estimates, though their number appears to be large. On the whole, 20%z female workers are under 20 years of age, as compared to 14% of boys.

10.4 The link between high female work participation at an early age and high rates of drop out of girls from schools is further illustrated by the higher rates of illiteracy among female workers.

10.5 Lower education levels, diminished social status and concern of girl's safety lead to sex stereotyping of tasks. This is particularly true of adolescent girls who are constricted in the choice and the nature of tasks they can undertake.

10.6 It is estimated that a girl works for 10 hours a day on an average for 315 days in a year providing the family an annual labour, which at minimum wage, would cost approximately Rs. 2200/- to hire. By the time she ceases to be a child, the girl has contributed assistance to the family which in economic terms is around Rs. 40,000. Ironically, despite this contribution, she is considered a liability and drain on family resources.

11. While gender discrimination exists in providing care to the girl child in the areas of health, nutrition, education and distribution of work during early childhood years, this gets further heightened with the advent of puberty. As a young girl is seen to become more vulnerable, numerous restrictions are imposed on her as far as her movements and behaviour are concerned. There is an intense preparation in the socialization process for her to take on the roles as a wife and a mother. The process includes restrained behaviour in speech, carriage, appearance, conduct and interaction with males. By the time a young girl is married, she is expected to be well versed in home making and in the behavioral pattern expected of a wife and a daugther-in-law in the society. Dowry is viewed as a way of compensating a daughter, who is not given the right to parental property. The family considers it a duty to share gold and money and other utility items at the time of the marriage of a daughter as a way to let her feel economically secure. It is the practice of dowry which makes a girl a 'liability' for a family. Families start saving and keeping aside objects and items of use for giving as dowry the moment a daughter is born. Marriage and dowry expenses are among the greatest causes of indebtedness among the poor.

12. Because of the low status of women and the social perception of them as objects of private property, young girls are often victims of rape, incest and molestation. Almost 25% reported cases of rape are among the girls under 16 years of age. Due to economic compulsions, sometimes, girls are driven to prostitution. Several young girls are forced into beggary and are left to fend for themselves on the streets.

13. It is, therefore, clear that a deep understanding and appreciation of the sources of unequal gender relations alone will help in ameliorating the present situation. SAARC declared 1990 "The Year of the Girl Child" and 1991-2000 as the "Decade of the Girl Child". During this period programmes are proposed to -

- Increase public awareness of the value of the girl child;
- Reach girls with basic services for their survival and development;
- Ensure their participation in programmes of child development, health, nutrition and education;
- Increase the age of marriage; and
- Create a positive environment to allow girls to develop into productive and confident young women.

14. A National Plan of Action for the Girl Child for 1991-2000 AD has been drawn up by the Government. The Plan recognises the rights of the girl child to equal opportunity, to be free from hunger, illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation.

14.1 Towards ensuring survival of the girl child, the objectives are to :

- Prevent cases of female foeticide and infanticide and ban the practice of amniocentesis for sex determination;
- End gender disparity in infant mortality rate,

- Eliminate gender disparities in feeding practices, expand nutritional interventions to reduce severe malnourishment by half and provide supplementary nutrition to adolescent girls in need;
- Reduce deaths due to diarrhoea by 50% among girl children under 5 years and ensure immunization against all forms of serious illnesses; and
- Provide safe drinking water and ensure access to fodder and drinking water nearer home.

14.2 Protection of the girl child is to be ensured through the following:

- Relief for those girls who are economically and socially deprived and belong to special groups;
- Intervention to sensitize various Agencies on the need to protect the girl child and adolescent girls from exploitation, assault and physical abuse;
- Education and sensitization of male members of the family to the special needs of the girl child;
- Equal treatment, dignity and respect for girl children in the family and community as well as providing support and help in their day to day work so that they get time to avail of the opportunities for self-development;
- Rehabilitation services to reduce the growing instances of exploitation of girl-children and adolescent girls.
- Protection of girl-children and adolescent girls from prevalent social evils such as dowry, child marriage, prostitution, rape, incest, molestation etc. through appropriate legislation and proper enforcement.

14.3 Development would focus on strengthening of existing programmes and devising new ones when required. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), may be mentioned in this context. State Governments have also drawn up their own plans for the girl child.

15. Other innovative schemes to improve the status of the girl-child have been introduced. Among these may be mentioned Haryana's scheme known as "Apni Beti Apni Dhan" (One's daughter, One's valuable resource) whereby the State undertakes to provide support for the sustenance and the upbringing of the girl-child. Incidentally, this State has an adverse sex-ratio for girl child in the 0-6 age group and it will be interesting to study the long term impact of this programme on its demographic and societal patterns.

16. Special efforts are made to encourage girls to take up vocational and technical education by extending special incentives and include them in various employment oriented and income generating programmes.

17. For the inculcation of a scientific temper among girls, special efforts are made to strengthen education in mathematics and science. Facilities of laboratory, library and special coaching, where needed, are provided.

18. A great deal of interest has recently been generated in the development potential of adolescent girls and efforts are being made to bring them into the ambit of programme planning. It is proposed to expand the scope of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme in some States so as to include adolescent girls. The scheme proposes to achieve following objectives :

- To cover girls in the age group, 11 to 18 years;
- To improve the nutritional and health status of girls in this age group;
- To provide them the required literacy and numeracy skills;

- To train and equip the girls to develop skills, aptitudes and capabilities for earning an income, through Government sponsored and other programmes; and
- To promote awareness of health, hygiene, nutrition, family welfare, home management and child care.

18.1 In Phase One of the Scheme, 3 girls in the age group of 11-15 are identified in the Anganwadi Centre area of the ICDS scheme. These adolescent girls are provided, at the Centre itself, a meal on the same scale as pregnant women and nursing mothers. They also receive training over a period of 6 months so that they are equipped to manage the Centre on their own at a later date. The training includes all aspects of the Anganwadi work, including management of stores, organisation of the Centre, home visits, pre-school activities etc. The scheme is already in operation in 507 Blocks of the country since 1990.

18.2 In the Phase Two of the Scheme, 45,000 adolescent girls in the age group of 15-18 are to be benefitted. Opportunities are provided to discuss their problems as well as to avail of facilities of non-formal education, development of home-based skills, recreation etc. through "Balika Mandals" (Forums of Adolescent Girls). Special emphasis is laid on motivating illiterate adolescent girls to participate in skill training programmes with local applicability and demand.

19. Political, religious cultural and administrative as well as community resources are to be mobilised to create an ethos of care and value for the girl child and adolescent girls and also involve them in planning, implementing and evaluating of such developmental activities. It is only such an ethos that can eventually eliminate deep rooted gender disparities. This has been endorsed at a recent SAARC Workshop on the Girl Child at Delhi.

19.1 The approach includes, the following :

- To raise consciousness levels of parents who are the decision makers within the family unit;
- To provide inputs for personality development of the girl child so as to enhance her self image and enable her to take her own decisions, specially major ones relating to education and marriage;
- To provide child care facilities in schools to help those girls who are preoccupied in the nurturing of their younger siblings;
- To eliminate all forms of violence, overt and covert, perpetuated against the girl child within the family unit and the community.
- To strive to end such socio-cultural practices that are discriminatory to the girl-child.

20. Media, both print and electronic, plays a very significant role in removing gender biases and developing positive images of the girl child and adolescent girls. In a country like India where there are problems in reaching the rural and tribal areas, a mix of mass media with various traditional forms of communication is effective in reaching the illiterate. Several multi-media campaigns in rural areas especially in Bihar and Orissa under the recently concluded "Training Package for Women's Development' have been undertaken. These have been extremely beneficial. The slogan of the campaigns has appropriately been framed as "a happy girl-child is the future of the country".

21. An Action Research Project has been sponsored by the Department of Women and Child Development to study "The Girl Child and the Family". The Study has been undertaken by 22 Women's Studies Centres affiliated to various Universities in the country. It has revealed that the devaluation of the girl-child has been deeply internalised at several levels. Therefore, her self image needs considerable enhancement. Skills for economic betterment have to be provided in the village or neighbourhood itself. A number of struc-

tured changes are needed to free her from the chain of households tasks.

21.1 The findings of the study are being used for formulating need based interventions to improve the status of the girl child in the country. Efforts for developing an information base on the girl child will be a continuous process.

22. Enhancing sensitization to gender issues and promoting a positive images of the girl child and adolescent girls to influence policy makers, planners, administrators and enforcement machinery are important strategies being actively pursued towards securing their holistic development.

23. The girl-child and the adolescent girls are the keys to achieving a more equitable status and role for women of the future. Improvements in their condition and greater investment in their development will doubtless lead to a better and more promising future.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Meenaxi Anand Choudhury. Inputs provided by Dr. Adarsh Sharma.

SOCIETAL REORIENTATION

Laws alone cannot bring about abiding changes in an ancient social fabric such as India's. Legislation may not be quite effective, as the enforcing agencies and institutions often remain predominantly gender-biased.

1.1 The biases that actively check women and restrict their mobility and access to resources are also rooted in economic and social interests and unequal power relations. Apparently cultural, they have a material base which make them all the more intractable and resistant to change.

1.2 Patriarchal controls redefine and reassert themselves constantly cutting across barriers of caste and community, destroying the dreams of a gender-just society. It is now fairly evident that a degree of societal reorientation is needed in different sectors and at all levels.

1.3 This widely recognised truth is in no small measure due to the fact that women have become a "powerful revolutionary force". They are pouring into every forum, storming every bastion, demanding their right to be heard and to decide agendas.

2. If the focus is to be shifted to social change, then the reality of women's situation needs to be looked at. This reality means considering seriously the institutional basis of their oppression.

2.1 The family is the primary and apparently a problematic area of this subordination. It is an area where the values of patriarchy are strengthened and fortified, where the control over women's sexuality, labour, and reproductive power is rarely questioned.

2.2 It is here that violence against women reaches alarming proportions. Female foeticide, infanticide, dowry violence and torture, remain largely invisible and often tend to go unpunished, regardless of Constitutional guarantees and the long arm of the law.

3. Retrograde values are constantly reinforced through tradition, religion, customs and other similar institutions. These sometimes endorse practices and beliefs which are derogatory to the dignity of women.

3.1 They perpetuate stereotypical images which individuals find hard to resist, fearing loss of identity. Further, new practices and beliefs are found to be introduced to curb the spaces that women manage to gain through their difficult struggles.

4. Media often shapes public opinions, personal beliefs and even women's self-perception. The interests of a few form the basis for projecting what is meant to pass off as objective reality. The power to control and influence the media, unfortunately, still eludes women. The spread of a global consumerist culture, further confines them through the creation of a predominantly materialist environment. The influence of pornography and violence are the most blatant examples of this.

5. A reorientation that would create a gender-just society, would thus imply a radical change in all existing structures and institutions. Since the existing biases and growing inequality are not natural or biological, but socially and politically perpetuated, it is necessary to set in motion a process where gender relations are completely restructured.

5.1 This would mean creating an awareness about the connection between gender, control and power and building a commitment to redress the existing inequality. It would include an acknowledgment that empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power. It would promote women's inherent strength and a positive self-image. The focus would be on men and women within the family, in educational institutions and in community-based organisations.

5.2 In the Indian context, the role of the family is crucial. Ironically, as is well-documented, it is also often the site where deep-rooted discrimination, finds expression. It is important therefore, that attitudes of both men and women within the family change so that this bias is removed.

5.3 There are many views on how this is to be done. It may be with a spot-light on the Indian concept of "Ardhangini" (Integral part of self) and the analogy that a marriage is representative of two wheels of a cart both of which must move equally to take it forward. These are considered relevant in today's situation. Daughters also need to be supported, and not viewed as liabilities. The same holds true for other women members within the family.

5.4 The sensitization of males is essential not only for their cooperation but to reduce conflicts in the family which are likely when long-accepted perceptions and traditions are changed. There is little hope for any improvement in their treatment if changes are brought about in an isolated manner, while the larger social fabric remains unresponsive. The goal may perhaps not be easy to attain, but that is no reason for slackening.

5.5 Several initiatives have been taken up by the Government and non-Governmental sector as part of this endeavour. Multi-media campaigns have been mounted to sensitise people using in addition to print and electronic media, songs, slogans, posters and street plays.

5.6 Innovative strategies of community mobilisation have also been used. The National Literacy Mission, through the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs), has played a key role in raising awareness on issues of gender equity as have the Women's Development Programme, "Mahila Samakhya" and several other programmes. The basic end-objective has been to enable women to become creators and producers of facets of social transformation and not remain mere passive recipients and consumers of given images, ideologies, practices and norms.

5.7 One of the core mandates of the National Machinery has been to advocate change of attitudes and values of the entire Governmental machinery from within and society at large. The change in perceptions of women in the last two decades, unmatched in the history of the country, makes this "do-able."

5.8 It is important to build on the positive results of the changes as they emerge and develop and bring them to bear on policies and programme at the macro-level. Their mutual interaction has been found to pay rich dividends.

6. Advocacy is an important mechanism whereby demand and lobbying for action can be taken up. Advocacy envisages the need to actively propound empowerment related issues for women, ensuring that they remain in focus, without getting marginalised. It aims at the translation of mere concerns and rhetoric - of which there is no dearth - into reality. Advocacy is crucial for integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of development.

7. Women's Studies Centres across the country and Development institutes have researched and articulated gender concerns and provided material for advocacy. Campaigns, rallies, workshops, seminars, Conferences and Consultations have helped in identifying strategic issues and throwing them open to wide public debate. These have forced the pace of change. The women's movement has also played a dual role of demanding and petitioning the State and co-operating with relevant data, whenever required.

8. There is a paucity of professionally trained advocacy groups and no institutional mechanism to follow-up existing efforts in a co-ordinated manner. However, campaigns and pressure groups with popular support, have redefined and articulated several complex issues such as sexual and domestic violence and child marriage. The full potential of engineering change, through advocacy, has not been realised, though a promising beginning has been made.

9. Significantly, issues and demands for change, that fall squarely in the social sector often manage to achieve a degree of success. The Planning Com-

mission has, as a result of advocacy efforts, among others, accepted that women's empowerment is inexorably linked to social attitudes and that it is important to root out biased attitudes and implant positive attitudes. It is paradoxical, however, that even within the social sector issues, those which are identified as "soft" (through the term is somewhat controversial) and relate clearly to women and child development, do produce results. But when gender concerns are highlighted as impinging on critical macro-policy issues such as population policy, new economic policy, environment etc., they are seldom found to make sufficient headway, no matter how well organised or documented. This is because structural factors are invariably, change-resistant.

10. There is a need not only to hone advocacy skills, but also to combine them with efforts of building dynamic networks from the grassroots level upwards. Sustained efforts, with sufficient backup, may leave a better impact. Moreover, the present strategy of working intensively yet sporadically on selected issues may be reviewed for greater effectiveness. Advocacy could cut across existing socio-political structures. Here the lessons of other advocacy efforts, such as environment and human rights could be adapted. Partnership, as opposed to occasional confrontation, is an approach which could be fostered.

11. Advocacy could also highlight the need to improve delivery mechanisms of services provided by the Government. There can be no escape from the generally accepted conclusion that as far as policies and their implementation go, gender-biased attitudes of the implementing agents remain stumbling blocks. No policy, however well conceived or articulated, can overcome the blocks and biases at the crucial cutting edges. This is further complicated by the fact that women's issues impact the family and man-woman relations, the whole realm of the 'personal' which is by and large perceived as immutable and beyond the pale of law.

12. To bridge this gap, a system of checks and balances needs to be built, in addition to a monitoring mechanism that will ensure a systematic progress towards social change. Incentives and other appropriate systems need to be evolved at every level. Without benchmarks and other related parameters, it has often been extremely difficult to gauge the extent of empowerment achieved by the programming efforts of the last few decades.

13. To understand the gap between policy and reality, several underlying factors have been analysed. The National Perspective Plan for Women identifies training as a key strategy in changing social attitudes. This means creating an awareness that inequity based on gender exists. It implies taking a holistic view of the social arrangements before attempting to change them. This is a sensitive area and because the biases are so deep-rooted they cannot be set right through a short duration module brought in from outside. It requires understanding, commitment and a sensitivity sustained through proper follow-up.

13.1 Gender training requires skills and conceptual clarity. It is also critical for the success of the effort that it is participatory and that the conclusions are reached through reflection and analysis. Gender training is not a mechanical inclusion of men and women in each workshop. It has to work at multiple levels.

14. For the past several years such training programmes have been organised by different Agencies, Government and non-Governmental. The Department of Women and Child Development has set up a Working Group on Gender Sensitization and taken it up in a fairly large scale in different parts of the country. A tremendous demand has been generated for more such programmes.

14.1 An example of this is the recently concluded, 'Training Package for Women's Development', which is leading up to establishment of a National Resource Centre for Women. Several modules on gender sensitisation have been prepared and some have also been published.

14.2 The current thinking on gender training and sensitisation is to make the programmes more focussed and linked with action plans, amenable to close monitoring and evaluation. This has significant implications. In this connection, the major efforts made for training elected women representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, throughout the country, in the last two years, are noteworthy.

14.3 Other important measures include training on women's legal rights, employment and credit issues, leadership and organisation, functioning of Women's Development Corporations, sensitisation of the law enforcement machinery, development planners and administrators in different sectors.

15. Under the'Training Package', a national level sensitisation programme on women and credit, led to the initiation of a pilot-project on "Gender Issues in Credit and Support Services", which is now being successfully implemented in 6 Districts country-wide, through select nationalised banks, local administration, non-Governmental organisations and elected people's representatives.

16. There is an important 4-year gender training project under implementation by the Central Department of Personnel and Training, which networks with training Institutions, Government Departments, research Institutions and non-Governmental Organisations.

17. Among other important training initiatives are those supported by the National Institute of Rural Development, National Academy of Administration, National Police Academy, National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Indian Institute of Public Administration and selected State level Training Institutes.

18. Several non-Governmental Organisations have also taken up gender training and have adopted interesting techniques to make them effective. The extent of coverage by non-Governmental Organisations is commendable. There is a healthy exchange of experiences, resources, techniques and aids in gender training. Government has prepared a Resource Book on national and regional level training Institutions, which offer gender-related training programmes. It will be useful in making gender-sensitisation and training more broadbased.

19. Substantial efforts have been made in this particularly difficult and complex area. The experience has been a mixed one and evidently, there is considerable scope for improvement. It has been a continuous learning process for all those involved. Quite often the success of the programmes depend largely on the dynamics set in the group. Obviously, these cannot be planned as one-time events. The strategies which have emerged need to be developed and improved. Further, it is necessary to mainstream these programmes effectively so that they become an integral part of ongoing training efforts in all sectors.

20. Reorientation, advocacy and sensitisation need to be viewed as different facets of the strategy leading to the goal of empowerment. Together, they can act as catalysts and usher in change for women. Nebulous though they may seem at the moment, they could be the seeds from which could sprout a wonderful tree.

Based on contributions received from Core Group headed by Kamla Bhasin. Inputs provided by Vasanta Kannabiran.

WOMEN IN MEDIA

India is a large and diverse country, with an equally sizeable and varied media. Radio reaches out, to 97.2% of the population and is followed by television which has a reach of 85.4%. The print media, while much smaller and unlike radio and television, predominantly private, nonetheless has its own importance and legitimacy.

2. Today, with the globalisation of media, India is at the receiving end of a number of foreign television channels via satellite. In addition, local cable networks provide a wide range of programmes for different kinds of audiences. Recently, radio has been partially privatised with companies being allowed to buy time on the FM band.

2.1 There is considerable debate on the possible entry of foreign newspapers; where books are concerned, Government has always followed a policy of open imports, with a few restrictions. Thus the media scene in India, while predominantly Indian, has some foreign influence, too.

3. As has been recognised by the Platform. For Action to be adopted at the World Conference on Women, media perpetuates gender stereotypes. By selective and biased messages it renders invisible many aspects of women's contribution to society. This perpetuation contributes to women's overall subordination in society.

3.1 Media does not merely "reflect" reality; it shapes it, both at an ideological and at a material level. While there are times at which the media is relatively open to the plurality of women's roles and their contribution, these attempts often remain unseen and unheard because of the much stronger force of the negative messages.

4. Over the years there has been some improvement in employment patterns within media in India and there are more women in television, radio and print media than there were two decades ago. In some cases, women have been able to shatter the proverbial glass ceiling. However, even today, despite the relatively greater visibility of women in media organisations, statistics tell a bleak story.

4.1 A recent study conducted by the Media Advocacy Group in Delhi on behalf of UNESCO shows that the number of women in Doordarshan and All India Radio are, at present, roughly between 12-15% of the total number of full time employees. Among these, women are concentrated at the lower, administrative levels. There are more women in production but they are largely absent from decision making processes and are therefore unable to influence policies.

4.2 At present very little gender training is available to sensitise media, though this is a demand that has been repeatedly put forward by women's groups and activists to ensure a more balanced portrayal of women.

5. Where the question of representation is concerned, women continue to be misrepresented. Women's roles remain typecast as passive, victimised wives, mothers or sisters, whose place is in the home. Where news programmes are concerned, women are not very prominent. Their portrayal in programmes or features, still leaves a great deal to be desired.

5.1 Advertisers are beginning to recognise women as a distinct constituency. Products are increasingly being targetted at them. The advertising world still continues to use the "objectified" female body as its major selling point. This, coupled with the increasing violence against women in the media is a dangerous trend as it is likely to impact on the standing of women in society.

6. In response to the demands for positive representations, media has responded and begun to give greater space to women. The responsibility that the media has towards society has also been stressed. It has been argued that this responsibility, particularly in a country with a rich and plural culture as India's, should not end up only as a token gesture.

7. In television and films portrayal of women's

issues is more complex for the electronic media has experienced major changes in the eighties. Cinema, for example, unable to face competition and generally lacking in new ideas, has increasingly turned to high-budget, action-oriented multi-star productions, with restrained and conventional portrayals becoming a thing of the past. The glorification of the underworld and the uninhibited depiction of violence has had serious repercussions for women.

7.1 Activists, researchers and experts have been intermittently demanding a media policy, since these new developments manifested . The first opportunity came in 1982, when the Government constituted a Committee under the Chairpersonship of Dr. P.C. Joshi, to make recommendations on relevant programming and better software on television. An Expert Group on the portrayal of women was also established to advise the Committee on this issue.

7.2 Many vital recommendations were made by the Expert Group and clearly articulated by the Committee. Although the Report of the Committee was not formally endorsed by the Government, it is perceived as one of the most credible policy initiatives on this issue. Even the National Perspective Plan on Women was greatly influenced by the Joshi Committee report.

7.3 The absence of an integrated Media Policy does not imply that the Government is not addressing this issue. Each media follows its own prescribed code with regard to the portrayal of women.These include; the Code for Commercial Advertising on the All India Radio and Doordarshan, the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 and the Cinematograph Act of 1952 under which a Central Board of Film Certification previews films for public release. Recently the Cable TV Network (Regulation) Act, 1995, has also been enacted.

7.4 Government has set up a Sub-Committee of the Consultative Committee of Parliamentarians attached to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to prepare a working paper on a National Media Policy.

7.5 During the last two years matters pertaining to vulgarity, obscenity and violence in Indian films and their screening on television have also been the focus of public debate, within Parliament, media and public forums. Many of the networks are using film and film-based programmes to ensure advertising support and ostensibly retain viewer loyalty. A recent report on viewer responses to obscenity and violence on television, produced by the Media Advocacy Group addresses itself to this subject.

7.6 In response to this situation the Government held a National Consultation in May, 1994 where focal institutions such as the National Commission for Women and women MPs participated. Subsequently, measures like certification of songs and dance sequences for telecast, and increasing the representation of women on the Board of Film Certification and its advisory panels have been taken up.

8. While books and newspapers form a relatively smaller part of the media industry in the country, they carry their own weight. Books on women and by women are far fewer in number than those on men. Nonetheless the last decade has seen the setting up of women's publishing houses (Kali, Mandira, Horizon, and others) some of which publish exclusively on women. Mainstream publishing houses have also begun to take the question of gender seriously.

8.1 It was as a result of the women's movement of the seventies and eighties, that women's issues began to find their way into mainstream papers. While coverage has been mixed, it is also true that many issues such as women's struggles against violence, dowry, rape, their fight to protect the environment, have received a great deal of sympathetic coverage in newspapers. Several national dailies have also set up gender pages, and there are more women working in the medium. In the capital, women journalists have recently got together to form a Women's Press Corps.

8.2 The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is among the major publishers of school textbooks. It has set up a Women's Studies Department whose brief it is to analyse textbooks for gender biases and to hold workshops on questions relating to gender.

8.3 Outside the NCERT, several analyses have been carried out on gender biases in textbooks, and their findings are being taken examined both by Government Agencies and private publishers.

9 While mainstream media still have a long way to go before their representation of women becomes fair and egalitarian, it is in the alternative and folk media that experiments have been most successful. Women's education, literacy and empowerment programmes have made use of a variety of media forms, street plays, storytelling sessions, songs, dances etc.

9.1 These forms have been important because they have played a major role in bringing up the question of control. Rural women form part of "Video - Sewa", and are able to make video films and show them to their colleagues. In doing so, they have been immensely empowered both personally and politically.

9.2 Information technology advances are also being harnessed to empower women. (See Box).

9.3 Other notable developments in the alternative media sector, include the women's journal Manushi, the network of women journalists called the Women's Feature Service, the Media Advocacy Group, Madhyam Communications, Abhivyakti etc. These are only a few of the many media organisations that exist in the country.

10. Media cannot be seen in isolation from the political and economic context of the society in which it is located. Thus, until such time as women continue to be seen as secondary beings, until such time as their economic and political contribution to society continues to be undervalued, media will not, by itself, produce change. Nonetheless, steps need be taken to improve the representation of women and to give them more access to decision making and expression within the media.

10.1 Public debate has focussed on some of the following aspects in this connection:

- Greater opportunities and affirmative policies to encourage women to enter media.
- Increased in-service training and retraining of women media professionals to enable them to achieve competence in fields they have been generally denied access to (e.g. technical fields, news reporting, overseas assignments and so on).
- Gender-sensitive training for all media professionals. The objective of this would be to sensitise the practitioners to the fact that women are equal partners in society and need to be projected as such.
- Regular analyses of viewer impact, tastes and preferences, as well as readership patterns, in order to determine what kind of gender sensitive programmes would be more effective.

11. A systematic and planned approach to bring in positive imagery of women in media as well as making media more accessible to women are certain to reverse the current unhealthy trend of negativism and typecasting.

Based on contributions from Urvashi Butalia, Women's Feature Services and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

GRAMSAT

The rapid development of communication, in particular the audio-visual, combined with the spread of informatics have opened up new horizons and multiplied the linkages between education and communication.

One such linkage called 'Gramsat' has been successfully launched in mid-February for elected women representatives of Karnataka Gram Panchayats to equip them for their new roles.

Gramsat is a satellite programme, using a one-way video and two-way audio broadcasting technology. The video programme, a mix of live interviews, group discussions, role plays, spots, games and so on, has been prepared in intensive sessions with women representatives of Panchayats, on identified themes relevant to the functioning of Panchayats.

The first programme was aimed at a group of 30 elected women representatives from each of the 19 Districts of Karnataka. The women gathered at the District Training Institutes for 3 days where programmes were beamed and a talk-back facility helped get their responses and queries to an expert panel in Bangalore. This gave the women space to air their views and impressions and also made them realise that when it came to resolution of problems, they were not alone.

Several more programmes have been planned for the future.

Source : Uma Prachar - March-May, 1995, ISST, Bangalore.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT - A SKETCH

The women's movement in India is a rich and vibrant movement. It is often said that there is no one single cohesive movement in the country, but a number of fragmented campaigns. This, in fact, is one of the strengths of the movement which takes different forms in different parts.

2. The history of the women's movement is usually dated to the social reform movements of the nineteenth century when campaigns for the betterment of the conditions of women's lives were taken up, initially by men. By the end of the century women had begun to organise themselves. Gradually, they took up a number of causes such as education, the conditions of women's work and so on.

2.1 It was in the early part of the twentieth century that women's organisations such as the Women's Indian Association, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the All India Women's Conference took up the struggle for women's rights. Many of these were women who became active in the freedom movement and it is from them that the contemporary movement flows.

3. The most recent phase of the women's movement dates from around the mid seventies. This was sparked off by the report submitted the Committee on the Status of Women in India in 1974 and international developments which highlighted women's issues and concerns. After a spate of activity in the Universities, and anti price rise movements, women came together to form activist groups.

3.1 Parliamentary parties had their own women's wings such as the Janvadi Mahila Samiti (CPM), the National Federation of Indian Women (CPI), the Mahila Dakshata Samiti (Janta Party), the Mahila Congress (the Congress(I)). A large number of groups also stayed outside the party framework, defining themselves as autonomous and independent and concentrating on work in the social sectors.

3.2 Over the years, groups within and outside parties have worked together and have had differences on specific issues. But they have also learnt from each other and in small ways, influenced each other's politics and work.

4. Some of the earliest autonomous groups were the Progressive Organisation of Women (POW, Hyderabad), the Forum Against Rape (now redefined as the Forum Against the Oppression of Women, Bombay), Stree Sangharsh and Samta (Delhi).

4.1 The more immediate precursors of these groups and activists within them were organisations such as the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini's women's wing, the women who were active in the Shahada movement in Maharashtra, the women of the anti price rise movement in Maharashtra and so on. These women came out of a history of involvement in radical, secular and civil liberties politics in the country.

5. Among the first campaigns that women's groups took up was the struggle against rape. This was triggered by a judgement of the Supreme Court to acquit two policement who were accused of raping a minor tribal girl in Maharashtra despite the fact that the High Court had indicted them. 4 eminent lawyers addressed an open letter to the Chief Justice of India protesting the patent injustice of this decision and this led to a countrywide campaign against the atrocity.

5.1 Several other key cases became part of this campaign which culminated, after several years of protest, in Government agreeing to change the law on rape. The amended law was enacted in 1983 after long discussions with women's groups. Since then, feminists have lobbied again to have the law further changed to make it more stringent and have also fought for an implementation machinery to be set up without which the law is less effective than it was intended to be.

6. New and fresh protests against dowry were organised by, among others, the Progressive Organisation of Women in Hyderabad. After the lifting of the state of Emergency, Delhi became the

focus of the movement against dowry and the violence inflicted upon women in the marital home. Key groups which took up the campaign in Delhi included 'Stree Sangharsh' and 'Mahila Dakshata Samiti'. Later, a joint front called the 'Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch' was formed under whose umbrella a large number of party and non party groups worked.

6.1 The anti dowry campaign attempted to bring social pressure to bear on offenders so that they would be isolated in the community in which they lived.

6.2 Experience in the campaign revealed the real need for counselling, legal aid and advice to women It was in response to this that legal aid and counselling Centres were set up in different parts of the country. Women's organisations also succeeded in getting the law on dowry changed.

7 However, over the years it has become only too clear that changing laws alone means little unless there is a will to implement them and unless there is education and literacy which allows women to exercise their rights effectively. It was this realisation that led women in India to take up in a more concerted manner the implementation of rights in different fields that had been guaranteed to them by the Constitution and other legislations. The issues now are as diverse as education and health, literacy, violence in the workplace and at home, women's reproductive rights, the right to a safe environment, the right to a gender sensitive media, the struggle against communalism, sectarianism and the rights of minority women.

8 The women's movement in India is often accused of being urban based and middle class in character. However, while urban feminists and activists may be articulate and visible, the movement is by no means limited only to them and it is a mistake to judge the existence and strength of the movement only by what is most visible about it. Several issues have been taken up by rural women, and urban women have come into some of these much later.

9. While the seventies are known for the anti-dowry and anti-rape campaigns, there was another movement at this time which deserves equal attention. This was the Chipko movement, in north India, where village women spontaneously clung to trees to protect them from being felled by unscrupulous contractors.

9.1 The movement was sustained over many years and spawned similar protest actions in other parts of the country. It was the women of Chipko who brought to public attention the importance of trees and the need to protect the environment. This is today one of the key issues the movement continues to work on.

10. There were several campaigns in the eighties relating to rights of women. Among them was a campaign in support of a Supreme Court judgment in a divorce case in which a woman had petitioned the Court for maintenance from her husband under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

10.1 While she was granted maintenance (albeit meagre) the Court's observations on the relevant personal laws raised a debate on the larger question of uniformity and gender equity in Civil Codes applicable to all communities.

11 For the women's movement such campaigns were significant in many ways, not least of which was the participation of women in the very politics that were oppressive for them.

11.1 It was during this period that the movement was able to introduce a special component approach to Government sponsored women's programmes under the Seventh Plan.

11.2 The need to address women's identities as members of their community, class, caste, religious group, has now assumed some importance and has led to considerable self reflection within the movement. Today there are conscious attempts to be more sensitive to India's diversities, within her unity.

12. Over the years it has also become clear within the movement that while street level protests and demonstrations have helped to achieve some level of visibility, this has clearly not been enough.

12.1 What is needed is attention to the problems of the mass of Indian women : equal status, equal opportunities and empowerment, health care, employment guarantees, safety in the home and family and at a more basic level, survival needs such as food, water and housing. The last few years have thus seen the broadening and expansion of the movement to take in a whole range of issues.

12.2 Today, while there are groups that take on campaigning work, there are also others who have set up legal aid Centres, or who run shelters, provide counselling, conduct training workshops, or prepare and print materials of use to women and are actively involved in Government programmes such as Total Literacy Campaigns etc. According to the Report of the Expert Group evaluating the Campaign, women not only constitute the majority of the total learners, but are also very proud and happy to be acquiring literacy.

13. The issues of concern to the movement have also become much broader. In the South a strong movement against alcoholism and the violence it has led to, has resulted in the State government imposing a ban on the issuing of liquor licenses (See Box).

13.1 This is only one of several examples of how activism within the women's movement has been able to influence policy and planning. Because of activism within the movement and the kinds of issues that have been raised, State policy has been found to respond and has moved from being welfarist to development and empowerment oriented.

14. The women's movement has spread to different parts of the country and is now a strong force. It is, however, important to recognise that for a country of India's magnitude, change in male-female relations and the kinds of issues the women's movement is focussing on, will not come easily.

14.1 For every step the movement takes forward, there will be a possible backlash, a possible regression. History shows that although the struggle for women's rights as human beings is long and hard, it is a struggle that must be waged and won.

Based on contributions from Urvashi Butalia, Women's Feature Services, Dr. Aparna Basu and Avabai B. Wadia.

REWORKING GENDER RELATIONS, REDEFINING POLITICS :-

NELLORE VILLAGE WOMEN AGAINST ARRACK

Over the last decade or so, the southern State of Andhra Pradesh has witnessed a series of struggles against Government backed sales of arrack (local liquor). So effective was the mobilisation that it became a major issue in the elections held in 1994.

In 1992, the movement which started in Nellore District gathered rapid momentum in several adjacent Districts. The primary initiators of the anti-arrack movement in Nellore were poor rural women.

The movement had many origins, one of the more important forces being the 'Akshara Deepam' (Literacy Lamp) programme, a Government-initiated programme to eradicate illiteracy, in which women participated enthusiastically. Narratives of women's achievements were written into neo-literacy primers, such as the story of Dubagunta village, called 'Adavallu Ekamaite' - "If women unite".

For many, personal tragedies led to the struggles against arrack, especially when they realised that these experiences were shared by most women in the community.

It was remarkable that the movement spread to 800 villages in a matter of months. Arrack was one of the planks on which the present State Government came to power. The new Chief Minister immediately banned arrack sales in the State. Subsequent attempts to remove the ban caused such a hue and cry that it had to be reinforced.

Because of the struggle, the women gained a measure of control over their daily lives and transformed relations with their men. By enforcing the closure of village arrack shops and targetting the Excise Department officials and the Excise Police, they also effectively confronted the State and destabilised its economy.

In developing unique forms of struggle and resistance, women who had never been involved in politics, as traditionally understood, were redefining the meaning of the political. No group or party provided the movement with an ideological framework or strategic plan. Arrack became the nodal point enabling women to comprehend their daily predicaments related to work, the family, economy, health, education, personal lives — and initiate action to gain a measure of control over them.

Based on an article appearing in the Economic and Political Weekly, January 16-23, 1993 Pgs. 87-90 and newspaper reports.

PERSPECTIVE FOR THE FUTURE

The preceding chapters have tried to capture the dynamics of gender and development as they are unfolding in India today. Key issues, challenges, concerns, threats and expectations have been identified. Presenting the many facets of Indian women : the pain, the joy, the drudgery and the hope of their daily lives in all their amazing diversity has not been easy. What has however made this task possible is the fact that this has been a sketch drawn and seen through the eyes of women themselves.

The consultative and transparent nature of this process has been in keeping with India's true democratic spirit. No matter what our problems have been, no matter how difficult and how strenuous our path has been, what has never been in doubt in this land of 900 million people, is our foundation of democracy. India is amongst those few nations where women have had equal rights to vote from the very dawn of independence. An independent judiciary, a rich tapestry of culture, languages and religions, a free Press and rule of law have been our most cherished values and traditions.

Like the many contrasts that Indian Society mirrors, the status of women in India is also full of dichotomies and ambivalences. While the falling sex-ratio is a cause for great concern, it needs to be recognised that there have been improvements in female health and decline in mortality in the last few decades. There has been an increase in the age of marriage and decline in the general fertility rate. The gender gap in infant mortality rates has been bridged. Girls' school enrolment has also improved considerably.

Although most women are in agriculture, casual employment and the informal sector, the work participation rates of women have been rising steadily. During the last decade the number of women entering the organised sector of employment has exceeded that of men. Women are no longer regarded as part of the vulnerable, disadvantaged category of society, waiting for Government doles and welfare measures. They have been recognised as being critical to the success of development processes.

The Nation, however, is constantly aware of the challenges that lie ahead. Unacceptable levels of poverty and the gradual feminisation of such poverty are the most daunting of all our challenges. The eradication of poverty and a special focus on women in all poverty alleviation programmes have been major strategies since the seventies. Our social sector investment has grown steadily and accelerated dramatically during the last 4 years to constitute more than 40% of our Central budget alone. Special components for women have been built into almost all programmes in the social sector.

Our other major plank has been our efforts to give women control over and access to factors of production. We have been setting up special credit and savings programmes. We have been encouraging the joint ownership of property by women and men. We have today innumerable examples in the country of the successful empowerment of women through education and literacy programmes, through thrift groups, through co-operatives, through skill training and through wage employment.

This brings us to what has been a landmark initiative in our efforts at improving women's access to decision making structures. We are today witnessing in India a quiet revolution in this regard. Through Constitutional Amendments, we have guaranteed to women a minimum 33 1/3% of seats in all institutions of local governance and in the posts of Chairpersons of such bodies. Almost a million women in rural areas alone are about to enter public office and have a say in the lives and destinies of themselves and their families. Women's political participation is about to become a reality. Both the Government as well as the women's movement eagerly await the tremendous groundswell of participation that this process will eventually generate.

Human development, in all its many aspects is the ultimate goal of our Eighth Plan. It is towards fulfilling this goal that the Plan accords priority to achieving near full employment by the turn of the century, eradication of illiteracy, universalisation of elementary education and provision of primary health facilities to all. The Plan also recognises the essential need to involve people in the process of development. In the Eighth Plan nearly 81.7% of the total budgetary support to the Central Ministries has been earmarked for the social, infrastructure and agricultural sectors compared to 70% in the Seventh Plan.

The Country Report, however, recognises that though women's issues have moved centrestage in our thinking and women's participation is now an inseparable part of both the rhetoric and theory of planning, gender equality and gender justice are still distant dreams. Our society bears a heavy burden of history. Our mind-sets have to undergo major changes. Gender violence both physical and psychological, continue unabated. Fear of violence perpetuates women's exclusion from development processes. Although we pride ourselves in our constitutional and legal edifice, their realisation in letter and in spirit, in so far as gender is concerned, is yet to be achieved.

It is this persepctive of Government and our women's movement that we have re-iterated time and again at international fora. We have underscored the goal of poverty eradication as an ethical, moral, political, social and economic imperative of nations and of the international community. Whether it is international trade, macro economic policies, or structural adjustment processes, or globalization, or even the environment, this is our underlying theme. Real sustainable development is that development which ensures the poor, and women in particular, the rights to food, work, shelter, education, health and information.

We have been advocating the need for affirmative action in favour of women and the need for reform of laws to ensure their equal access to property. We have spoken of the need for decentralised and accountable governance in order to provide space for the poor and for women. We have emphasized the principle of non-selectivity when enforcing Human Rights. We have spoken of the interdependence and indivisibility of all Human Rights. We have spoken of the Right to Development as an inalienable right of Nations and individuals. We have called for new and additional resources for the eradication of poverty. We have highlighted terrorism as a new and dangerous form of violence threatening to further marginalise women.

From Rio to Vienna to Cairo and to Copenhagen we have been raising these basic issues. For us, the Beijing Conference gives an opportunity to re-affirm and re-iterate these concerns from the women's perspective and through women's voices. It is this context and this ambience, which provides the backdrop for our Country Report, dedicated as it is to the cause, the hopes and the dreams of almost half a billion Indian women.

Contributed by S.K. Guha

GLOSSARY

Crore	:	Ten Million
Lakh	:	Hundred Thousand
Adimjati	:	Indigeneous People
Kosh	:	Fund
Mahila	:	Woman
Samriddhi	:	Prosper, Advance
Yojana	:	Plan
Panchayat	:	Local Self-governing Bodies
MP	:	Elected Member of the Lower House of Parliament
MLA	:	Elected Member of the State Legislature
Papad	:	A Wafer-thin Snack
Beedi	:	Indian Leaf Cigarette
Balika	:	Girl
Anganwadi	:	Creche
Rozgar	:	Income, Employment
Awas	:	Housing
Balwadis	:	Government-sponsored Creche
Nisa Band	:	Prohibition
Meira Paibi	:	Torch Bearer
Lok Sabha	:	Lower House of Parliament
Rajya Sabha	:	Upper House of Parliament
Samiti	:	Committee
Zilla Parishad	:	District Council
Gram	:	Village
Sewak	:	Servant
Taleem	:	Education
Kendra	:	Centre
Krishi	:	Farmer
Vigyan	:	Science
Bankura	:	A District in the State of West Bengal in India
Ragi Crop	:	A millet grown particularly in South India
Nari	:	Woman
Bikash	:	Progress
Sangha	:	A group of people pursuing a common goal
Sahayogini	:	A Female Assistant
Arrack	:	Liquor Made Locally
Samakhya	:	Collective
Lok Jumbish	:	People's Movement
Shiksha	:	Education
Karmi	:	Worker
Abhivyakti	:	Expression
Janvadi	:	Democratic
Daksha	:	Competent
Stree	:	Wife, Woman
Sangharsh	:	Struggle
Chhatra	:	Student
Yuva	:	Youth
Virodhi	:	Opposed to
Chetna	:	Consciousness
Jathas	:	Group of Troupe

Akshara	Alphabet
Deepam	Lamp
Navodaya	New Dawn
Vidyalaya	School
Dai	Birth Attendant, Midwife
Paryavaran	Environment
Vahini	Army, Group
Jal	Water
Nigam	Corporation
Chulha	Stove
Ardhangini	Wife
Kali	Goddess of Power
Jatra	Folk Drama
Manushi	Woman
Madhyam	Medium
Mandal	Group
Dalit	From a deprived section of society i.e. from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes.

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ADDENDUM

The team which worked on the Country Report within the Department of Women and Child Development, comprised S.K. Guha, Dr. Tuk Tuk Kumar, T.K. Sarojini, Jastinder Manchanda, Puneet Bhasin and S.K. Biswas.

Editorial support was provided by the Women's Feature Services, New Delhi.

CORRIGENDUM

Page 4	In Para 5, line 3, the word "India" is to be read as "Indian".
Page 6	In Para 13, line 6, the word "nuturance" is to be read as "nurturance".
Page 11	In para 3, line 7, "0 - 4" is to be read as "0 - 14". In para 5.3, line 3, a comma (,) should follow the word "maternal"
Page 13	In para 5.1, line 7, "PHS". to to be read as "PHCs" and followed by a comma (,).
Page 14	In para 5.6, line 10, the word "disagreegated" is to be read as "disaggregated". In "Fig. V " the following legend to be deleted "N.A. - Not available as yet".
Page 15	In para 7.1, first line, the word "decade" to be read as "decades".
Page 17	Para 8.4, line 4, "1992-93" is to be read as "1993-94". Para 8.5, last sentence is to be read as follows : "Girls' enrolment has increased by 88% at primary levels and by 96.8% at upper primary levels during the period 1951-94".
Page 22	In para 9.8, line 5 "Figure XVII" to be read as "Figure XVIII".
Page 24	In para 1.6, first line, the word "edific" is to be read as "edifice".
Page 63	In para 10, line 11, the text in brackets should read as follows: "(SEE BOX)".
Page 64	In the second Box entitled, "Land Development—a Unique Experiment", the name of the contributor is to be read as follows : "CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, NEW DELHI".
Page 68	In the Table on "Voting Pattern", Note 2 to be read as follows: "DATA RELATES TO LOK SABHA ELECTIONS & IS IN MILLIONS".
Page 70	In the Table on "WOMEN IN SELECTED SERVICES", Percentage of women in INDIAN POLICE SERVICE is to be read as "1.8%". Further, Percentage of Women in the INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE in 1987 is to be read as "10.0%".
Page 72	In the Table on "Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions", Remarks column, the second "***" is to be read as follows : "ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN SEPTEMBER 1995".
Page 122	In para 3, first sentence, the full stop (.) after the word "Platform" is to be deleted.

Express, Delhi · O.P. Sharma · Chitrangada Sharma · Virendra Ku

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EQUALITY • DEVELOPMENT • PEACE

FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN–BEIJING '95